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Sir Paul Dukes
K.B.E.

The YOGA of Health Youth and Joy

A Treatise on Hatha Yoga adapted to the West

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Here is a definitive account of one of the world's greatest and most powerful philosophies. Yoga is gaining adherents rapidly, and in this book Sir Paul Dukes, one of its foremost exponents, presents a detailed study of Yoga and its adaptation to the needs of the present-day Western world.

As a philosophy, there are many sides to Yoga and in this book the author deals with what is probably the most widely known but most misunderstood of them all. Hatha Yoga is that primarily concerned with the perfection of the body as a preliminary to perfection of the spiritual life, and it is a subject which until now has been approached with only the most superficial understanding in the non-Oriental world. It deserves to be better known.

In the first part of the book the author considers Yoga and its meaning. It has been a force of the greatest magnitude in Eastern countries for thousands of years, and its assimilation can be traced in many Western philosophies and religions.

In the second part of the book, a series of physical exercises are set out. These are the most generally known sides of Hatha Yoga, and here Sir Paul Dukes explains both their significance and also the way in which they can be used by all living under modern conditions to increase their health and general enjoyment of life.

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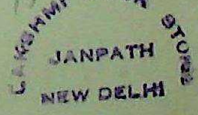

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The Yoga of Health, Youth and Joy

A Treatise on Hatha Yoga adapted to the West

by

SIR PAUL DUKES, K.B.E.

With photographic illustrations by the Author and Diana FitzGerald

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CASSELL & COMPANY LTD.
35 Red Lion Square, London WC 1
and at
MELBOURNE · SYDNEY · TORONTO · CAPE TOWN
JOHANNESBURG · AUCKLAND

© Paul Dukes 1960

First published May 1960
Second edition May 1960

Printed in Great Britain by the Shenval Press
London, Hertford and Harlow
460

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To
MY TEACHERS

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PREFACE

YOGA is an integral subject. Its divisions into spiritual, mental, or physical spheres, though necessary for proper consideration of various aspects, do not mutually exclude each other. To the Westerner with an eye on externals, physical Yoga makes the strongest, because the most visible, appeal. Consequently many fall into the error of imagining it to be merely a special system of bodily culture and its true purpose is often ignored. In India, on the other hand, the stress is heavily on the spiritual side to the detriment of the physical, which is often neglected entirely or studied in a half-hearted or one-sided manner. This book is an attempt to present the subject in balanced perspective.

Hatha Yoga is often referred to for convenience as physical Yoga. But the word Hatha does not mean physical, its literal meaning is 'sun and moon'. It is a cosmic term, and the correct interpretation of it, which the reader will find set forth in these pages, alone provides the key to its goal.

Man and his Maker have been aptly likened to Instrument and Player. In the playing they become one. In all branches of Yoga it is recognized that the playing is of the Player. If the music is to be divine it is essential that the instrument shall be carefully tuned and responsive. Thus viewed, Man's first duty to the Player should be to provide Him with an instrument worthy of His hand. Yet many professing devotees of 'spiritual' Yoga draw the strange conclusion that the instrument may be left to take care of itself and even be deliberately neglected. This peculiar contradiction is encountered frequently in India, perhaps more frequently in India than elsewhere.

In practical life Yoga means wholeness—of body, mind, and spirit. Wholeness is another word for health. It is sometimes claimed that Hatha Yoga prolongs life. It may, but this is merely incidental and a matter of small importance in itself. The value of life lies in its content, not its duration. Hatha Yoga seeks to enable us to live our lives, short or long, to the fullest purpose and benefit to ourselves and those around us. It is, however, true to say that with this in view physical Yoga

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does aim at prolonging youth and extending the *prime* of life—its most important period—well beyond what is customarily regarded as the normal 'retiring age'. In India, where standards of health and longevity are considerably lower than in the West, it caused surprise and interest that I, a foreigner, was able to give a complete demonstration of Hatha Yoga at the age of sixty-nine. I was consulted by high officials who wished to introduce Yoga physical training into the defence forces and among recruits to the civil service as a means of improving their health and general efficiency. The Director of Medical Services in the Armed Forces, himself a keen Yoga enthusiast, invited me to deliver a series of lectures under official auspices expounding my views on Yoga with full demonstrations of exercises and postures. These were given at the National Physical Laboratory at Delhi, to the medical and nursing staff of the Military Hospital, the National Defence Academy and other military establishments at Poona, and other army and air force centres at Dehra Dun. At Delhi my lectures were attended by Chiefs of Staff and representatives of ministries. The Director of Medical Services subsequently wrote me a warm letter of thanks for my efforts (as he expressed it) 'in spreading knowledge of Yoga in India'. As I had come to India as a student (which I shall continue to be even if I live to be a centenarian) this flattering appreciation moved me deeply. But I was told there had been some difficulty in finding professional Indian instructors of Hatha Yoga who, expert though they might be in performing the exercises, could give a balanced presentation of the subject suited to special conditions; whereas with my wide experience in many countries I have a quick grasp of the modifications that are always required in different circumstances and settings. The Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who has practised Yoga, invited me to a private interview with him and expressed his gratification that I was interested in this work. Subsequently he wrote to me: 'I am no authority on this subject, but the little I know has appealed to me, and I think it would be a good thing if many people took advantage of this training which is, I believe, essentially scientific. It should produce not only a sound and healthy body, but a mind which has poise and equilibrium and which cannot be swept away by every wind

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that blows. I am glad you are carrying this message of Yoga to other countries.' I have been invited to attend an all-India conference on the teaching of physical Yoga in India, the object of which, as the invitation states, is 'to collect knowledge and experience from various Yoga physical culturists and formulate a national programme of Yoga suitable for the masses'. This is an admirable project, but I shall unfortunately not be able to take part as I shall be in Australia at that time.

Like medicine, Hatha Yoga can be abused, but when properly practised I am convinced it has curative virtues which may sometimes seem miraculous. Since I owe so much to it myself I may remark that I was not endowed with a robust constitution at birth and have had my share of illness and accident, the last occasion being at the age of sixty which caused a long break. It is with deliberate purpose that I have included in this volume photographs mostly taken on the eve of my seventieth birthday, for it may perhaps be some encouragement to those who fear that age may preclude them from embarking on these studies to know that I succeeded through them in rehabilitating myself completely in my sixties.

The other photographs are of my former pupil and present colleague, Diana FitzGerald,* taken in her middle fifties. Diana FitzGerald came to study with me ten years ago and found her health so greatly improved as the result that she gave up all other occupations to devote herself entirely to this subject, of which she became an expert instructress and demonstrator. She had formerly spent many years in the East, mainly in India, and had taken a deep interest in philosophical subjects, but no amount of philosophical study will cure a long-standing internal disorder, whereas the cure of such a disorder may (and in her case did) impart an entirely new meaning to philosophy. When people came to Jesus to have their souls saved he usually began by first putting their bodies to rights. It is the time-honoured method of that branch of integral Yoga with which this book mainly deals, the training of the physical instrument, the removal of its disabilities, the exploration of its latent potentialities, and the clearing of the pathway for a more joyful unfolding of the soul.

* Now Lady Dukes.

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CONTENTS

Chapter *Page*

PART ONE

1 How This Book Came to be Written 3

2 Varieties of Yoga: The Yogas of Knowledge, Action, Devotion 13

3 The Secret Doctrine of Yoga 29

PART TWO

4 The Meaning of Hatha Yoga 47

5 The Art of Breathing 69

6 The *Asanas*: (1) Seated Postures, Shoulderstand and Headstand 87

7 The *Asanas*: (2) Sideslip, Bull, Spinal Twist 101

8 The *Asanas*: (3) Forward and Backward Bendings 107

9 Intestinal Control: (1) The Art of Eating 117

10 Intestinal Control: (2) Abdominal Exercises 131

11 Yoga Hygiene 137

Appendix I. The Inspirational Breath 153

Appendix II. Scheme of Practice of Exercises 162

Index 167

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I WOULD like to express my thanks to the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, for permission to quote from a private letter written to me.

For permission to use extracts from the undermentioned publications I am grateful to the following:

Messrs. Ganesh & Co., Madras (*The Serpent Power* by Sir John Woodroffe); Messrs. George Allen & Unwin (*Yoga and Health* by Selvarajan Yesudian and Elisabeth Haitch); Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar (*Introduction to Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika*); Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry (*Eight Upanishads* translated by Sri Aurobindo); Miss Storm Jameson for an article appearing in *This Week* Magazine, copyright 1955 by the United Newspapers Magazine Corporation, reprinted by permission of The Reader's Digest Association Ltd. (British Edition) December 1956.

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I beseech you therefore, brethren . . .
that ye present your bodies a living
sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,
which is your spiritual worship.

The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, XII, 1

By what men fall, by that they rise.

Kulinarva Tantra

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PART ONE

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I

How This Book Came to be Written

THIS book is being completed in the Himalaya Mountains, the source of all that its pages contain. Three or four thousand years ago, in the course of centuries of study and experiment, that which is known as Yoga—reunion with our Divine Source—was evolved and codified in these regions. Down below, where the Ganges pours its rushing waters into the plains at Hardwar and Rishikesh, it is said that the most ancient books known to mankind, the *Vedas*, on which the philosophy of Yoga is based, were put into written form by the *rishis*, saints, and sages of old who taught that the Universe is One, a unity of infinite diversity, as modern science is slowly but surely rediscovering. Those places have now largely become mere transit stations for pilgrims to Himalayan shrines. Even their reputation for sanctity is commercialized, their holiness has become formal and external. So fanatically vegetarian are they that in neither of these towns may you eat an egg, but their hordes of self-styled *sadhus* or 'holy men' make a good living touting for alms; their hostelries overcharge; and if you descend to the temple ghat by the river at Hardwar the professional cadgers inform you in no mistaken terms that, whatever you may have given them, it was not enough. Yet if you avoid the self-advertising 'world *gurus*' and public *ashrams* and mount the wooded slopes of the hillsides or, a few miles up, seek out the remote caves and hermitages nestling beneath the overhanging crags beside the Ganges, you may still find the genuine article. The saintly hermit who shuns all publicity, buried in meditation, keeping body and soul together with scraggy morsels left by secret devotees, practising

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those strange austerities through which the last vestiges of bodily passion are to be expunged. They are often known as Yogis, though their Yoga is of quite a different order from the Yoga of those who choose the path of facing the difficulties and troubles of life without evading them. The highest Yoga is not necessarily to retire from the world to the safe though comfortless seclusion of a cave. It is easy to retire from the world if one is willing and able to cast aside all responsibilities, and for some this is indeed the necessary path for which they are to be respected and revered. But Yoga in its highest sense teaches us how to face up to life, surmount its trials and tribulations, unenslaved by its transient treasures and meretricious delights. It trains us not to shirk emergency, but 'to meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two impostors just the same'. On this high level Yoga shows us how to be in the world yet not of it. This is the true sense in which one should retire from the world. The goal of all Yoga, wherever and in whatever form one practises it, is self-conquest, the mastery of thought and emotion. Tennyson's lines express it well:

> Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone lead life to sovereign power. . . .
> Acting the law we live by without fear;

Yoga is a Sanskrit word meaning 'joining' or 'unifying'. It is the original of the English word 'yoke' used in the sense of yoking two things together. Its root is *yug* or *jug*, which reappears in the middle syllable of the word 'conjugal'. The yoking or union implied is with the Divine Source from which we spring. What name we give that Source, whether we call it God, or Allah, or Brahman, or Ultimate Reality, Supreme Being, Fundamental Energy, or Holy Spirit, or any other personal or abstract term, must be a matter of choice. That which is beyond language can obviously never be truly named. The term Yoga is also used to denote various methods by which this union can be promoted. 'Take my yoga upon you and learn of me, for my yoga is easy and my burden is light.' These sublime words thus paraphrased denote the meaning perfectly. Yoga is the path to divine joy and contentment. Hence the title of this book. The

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word Yoga has no other meaning. Physical Yoga, the raising of the body to a state of divine health and strength, with which this work deals in particular, is one of the recognized paths and an important adjunct to all other paths since on this plane of existence the physical body is the only instrument through which in practical life we live and move and have our being.

The following pages are the outcome of many years of study, training, observation, and teaching in several countries. In my book *The Unending Quest* I sketched the growth of my interest in this subject from youth up. As there narrated, I received my earliest introduction to practical Yoga from an oriental master in Russia when in my youth I was a student of music in that country. In later years the teaching was greatly amplified during wide travels in many lands, under various instructors both oriental and occidental, but the fundamental grounding imparted by my first teacher remained unaltered. At the same time I had the advantage of contact with followers of H. P. Blavatsky through whom I made my first acquaintance with Vedanta* literature. This also happened in Russia.

The atmosphere of pre-revolutionary Russia was well adapted to such studies, for the movements that culminated in the overthrow of the old régime were revolutionary in every sense. The shelves of the Russian philosophical bookshops of that day abounded in works on oriental mysticism, Buddhism, Vedanta and Yoga, when Western Europe still had but scant acquaintance with these subjects. Helen Blavatsky had laid the foundation of modern Theosophy, and the apocalyptic visions of Mereshkovsky, the metaphysical speculations of Berdyaev, the mystical doctrines of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, all of which profoundly affected European thought between the two world wars, continued to be written and taught in Russia even after the revolution, until one by one their authors were compelled to flee from persecution.

One of the most picturesque figures in the mystico-religious galaxy and one who made a strong appeal to me as a young musician was the composer Alexander Scriabin, whom I met in the course of my professional duties when, after graduation, I

* Vedanta—the teachings of the *Vedas*.

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became assistant to the late Albert Coates, the chief conductor of the Imperial Opera. Scriabin was a visionary much influenced by Blavatsky and her no less eminent disciple Annie Besant whom he met in Paris. He conceived a vast work that was to be a synthesis of all art, philosophy, and religion, for which he was preparing to erect a special temple in India. But he died before this composition was completed. I mention these instances only to show how the cultured minds of pre-revolutionary Russia were peculiarly attuned to the study of mysticism even if their ideas were sometimes extravagant.

This was the environment in which I was privileged to receive my early initiation into the wisdom of the East. From the oriental master to whom I have alluded I learnt a great lesson—not to confine myself to academic studies alone, but first to train the physical instrument to be fit to receive and digest philosophic instruction. It has been the most treasured lesson of my life. I was introduced to this teacher in somewhat mysterious circumstances and never learnt exactly whence he hailed. Later, in India, I found it a common practice for *gurus* to bear assumed names and swathe their past in obscurity.

The First World War and the disturbed period of the Russian revolution interrupted these pursuits for several years. They were years of very great strain. When I was thirty-five I underwent a searching examination by the Life Extension Institute of New York. I was given a poor classification in spite of the fact that I was by that time again practising Yoga exercises at a well-known institution in America. But my practice was irregular, for I had to go on lecture tours that took me all over the United States describing my experiences in the Russian revolution.* It was not until I was nearly forty that I was able, when back in Europe, so to reorganize my life as to pursue my studies along the lines that made the strongest appeal to me.

It was a motive at once physical, philosophic, and religious that was my main incentive. The enigma that engrossed my mind was this: why did all great religions insist on the association of prayer with fasting? No one seemed able to give me a satisfactory answer to this question. One night I went to bed troubled in mind about it. Next morning the solution that had

* See *Secret Agent 'ST 25'*.

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presented itself to me during sleep seemed childishly simple. It was, merely, to try! It was as if a voice said clearly, 'No man can *give* you the answer, you must *find* it for yourself, by experimentation'. My experiments lasted over several years and led me into unforeseen channels. Guidance always appeared to help me forward, generally in some unexpected manner. This happened many times, in several countries in which I travelled. With this quest always in mind I received training in the orthodox methods of advanced Hatha Yoga modified to suit European conditions, but instead of physical Yoga being made an end in itself it was always subservient to the spiritual quest. I later learnt, and saw by personal observation both in Europe and India, that too exclusive a pursuit of the physical practices of Hatha Yoga may sometimes lead to very negative results. This is particularly so when the main hope is to acquire supernormal powers, as is often the case with young people who are carried away by this aspect of the subject. These powers are like fire; if too eagerly pursued they may consume the unfortunate seeker who succeeds in rousing them. But the answer to the problem of prayer and fasting came clear and precise. It lay in the intimate relationship between the physical and the spiritual. For prayer has nothing essentially to do with words or ritual, it is rather a process of attuning one's whole being to receive an infinitely subtle message, much as one tunes in to radio waves.* But this attunement is greatly expedited by purification of the bodily organism through which revelation must come, just as the efficient functioning of a radio apparatus depends on the quality and condition of its component parts. Now I understood why St. Paul wrote, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual worship'.† Spiritual worship, in other words, should start with providing

* This is not to deny the use and often the necessity of words as a means of clarifying thought in preparatory stages. The repetition, even mechanical, of carefully selected words or a formula dictated by one's teacher (a practice known as *japa*) is a recognized feature of devotional Yoga, and because of its potent efficacy was adopted by Professor Coué in his famous formula 'Every day in every way I am feeling better and better', which his patients were urged to repeat verbally or mentally all day long.

† Romans XII, 1. (Standard Revised Version.)

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our Creator with the most perfect possible physical instrument through which to reveal Himself.

Truth is always simpler than those who are fettered by dogma or convention would have us believe. The God to whom we address ourselves is not in the skies, He is within each one of us, we are He, or She, or It—whichever pronoun we prefer. This fundamental doctrine of Yoga was reiterated by Jesus. To pray is to seek within. The ancients called it concentrated inward meditation, and recommended certain anatomical points to which the attention should be directed; the so-called symbolic 'third eye' in the centre of the forehead; the heart; the solar plexus; the navel as the central point of the intestinal apparatus. We shall revert later to the recognized relationships between moral qualities and abdominal functioning. For the moment we shall consider, in seeking the God within, in what conditions is it more reasonable to expect Him to reveal Himself? In surroundings of health and purity or amid waste and putrefaction? Admitting that the truly seeing eye will discern the divine even in waste and putrefaction, is this sufficient justification for providing such conditions either deliberately or through negligence?

The moment one aspires to rise even a little above the plane of ordinary consciousness, or even to raise the purely physical organism above the brute level, the question of what one eats and drinks, and how, and how much, and why, begins to assume vital importance. No man can understand this who does not study the matter within his own organism, examining his physique critically for its remediable imperfections and the inescapable though perhaps subconscious influence of these conditions on his mind. An unsullied and spotless window of pure glass will admit light unhampered; a purified physique from which all toxic matter has been drastically eliminated is in a similar state. It does not have to *do* anything to function on a higher level, it merely has to *be*. This is the basic reason for fasting. The first condition for reaching this state is to cease all consumption of food until it is achieved, or at least reduce consumption to the minimum compatible with life. Water is not included in this prohibition. On the contrary, pure water, nature's arch-solvent, should be imbibed in large quantities for it materially aids in washing out impurities.

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As every experienced faster knows if he has perpetrated the experiment thoroughly, the most remarkable phenomenon in total fasting is that when given the chance to have a complete rest the intestinal tract does not take it; it does not cease to work but eagerly transforms itself into an active eliminative organ throughout its entire length, spontaneously aiding the beneficent task of house-cleaning, a procedure which is normally rendered impossible by the regular ingestion of food. Fasting is the quickest and most effective means of purification and therefore of natural healing, and the first mechanism to be restored to health is the digestive apparatus. But this is merely its grosser aspect with which most people who practise fasting for health rest content. To the spiritual seeker this physical purification is only a stepping stone. In the teaching imparted in higher Yoga, which is never taught in any open schools anywhere but only individually and usually in conditions of secrecy, the process of physical purification is accompanied by practices which have the effect of greatly accelerating the purificatory process and extending it to the liberation of the mind and spirit. These consist of special breathing exercises to increase yet further the oxygenation of the blood and thus intensify the process of purification; followed by exercises which have the effect of gradually bringing the breath itself almost to a standstill, all with the aim of stilling the disturbing processes of restless brain action and promoting the one supreme design of attunement with the divine power which is the life within.

This subject is mentioned here in some detail because it happens to be the line followed by the author in the course of his training. It is not suggested that it is the only path. There are many others, and for ordinary purposes of health and efficiency it is quite unnecessary to pursue extreme measures. Nevertheless the basic principle of purification underlies all Yoga practice. In seeking to approach the divine ideal in physical life and provide our Creator with a worthy instrument through which to work on this plane the first step must always be to rid the body of its impurities and all encumbrances of excess flesh.

During the Second World War duties relating to the war effort made it difficult to pursue these practices. Only after the war was I able to transfer the centre of gravity of my activities

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to the field which had secretly been my main quest throughout the years. A series of television broadcasts on Yoga which I delivered at the invitation of the B.B.C. gave birth to a wave of public interest in the subject. I opened a studio first in London, and later at Cape Town and Johannesburg. Several thousand students attended my lectures and classes. Then I came to India to renew contact with the original sources of my instruction and to complete this book. For over two years I have travelled about this vast land from Simla to Ceylon, from Calcutta to Bombay, visiting large numbers of schools and *ashrams*, some famous, some obscure, and many private *gurus* and Yoga instructors. My journeyings have rarely been of the so-called *de luxe* order. Long distances in the Himalayas were covered on foot, often entirely alone carrying my pack on my back. Hundreds of miles were traversed with pilgrims in rickety buses conveying the devout from all over India to remote holy places in the high mountain regions. In central and southern India I travelled mostly in third-class trains. It was a wonderful way to mix with the common people and study their behaviour. Everywhere I went my first inquiries related to the teaching of Yoga in any of its forms. A chapter of this book is devoted to a brief description of some of the varieties of the subject.

As far as physical Yoga in its popular form is concerned it is widely felt in competent circles that the subject is not well organized and rarely well presented in India, and the heads of several well-known schools voiced their complaints to me on this score. I would not like to pass judgment, but it seemed to me that one of the most prevalent mistakes is to entrust instruction to young men who do the exercises well but who cannot possibly have the wider experience that would give them a proper understanding of the problems of their students, especially the middle aged, who have had to face the buffetings of the world and suffer the almost inevitable disabilities attendant upon the artificial mode of life in modern civilization.

The notion seemingly prevalent in some quarters in the West that knowledge of Yoga is widespread in India is quite erroneous. By and large the average Indian citizen is anything but a shining example of his traditional philosophy, with which he is ill acquainted. The contrast between ideals and practice in a

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country whose forefathers gave the world so profound a philosophy as Vedanta has been pointed out by many, including Pandit Nehru. The ancient learning has fallen into disuse and interest in it is confined to the few. The tradition is now fortunately showing signs of revival. Perhaps it will be expedited by growing contact with the West, for in material fields India is making stupendous efforts to raise her standard of living. In spiritual fields India needs no guidance from the West, but still it remains a fact, which Britain may remember with satisfaction, that the revival of interest in ancient Indian philosophy is largely the result of the work of western scholars during the period of British rule, and of brilliant Indian scholars whose education was mainly European.

The design now launched to apply the principles of physical Yoga to improve the general health of the people is an admirable one which will be followed with as much interest in the West as in India itself. For Yoga in its integral form is a subject of universal concern, applicable to all times and climes. Its greatest exponents can now be found in the West as well as the East if one is fit to be received and accepted by them. It is no more necessary to go to India or Tibet to seek for them than it is to go to Palestine to find the foremost teachers of Christianity. But because Yoga in its highest form is essentially an aristocratic science in the true sense of the word *aristos*, and can never be conveyed to the multitude except in modified and generalized terms, the really great ones among its custodians, whether in the East or West, rarely reveal themselves and are not easy of access, for the guardians of the highest wisdom seek no publicity. But in whatever quarter of the globe this teaching is now to be found, and in whatever form or under whatever name it may be imparted, it has spread there from the snowy regions of the Himalayas and the high and lonely plains of Tibet and Central Asia. It was in these regions that the primeval doctrine that Creation is One, Truth is One, God is One, was first revealed and traditionally handed down from century to century to those capable of receiving it, to inspire one religion after another, one philosophy after another.

From the page lying before me I lift up my eyes with gratitude to the hills whence cometh my help. They tower in glorious array, range upon range, crowned by the ineffable majesty of

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glistening icy peaks, over two hundred miles of uninterrupted snowclad heights cutting the sky with jagged summits twenty, twenty-five, nearly thirty thousand feet above the level of the ocean. According to popular lore these lonely heights are the very abode of the Gods, those many Gods who are but different aspects of One. The Gods will not disclose their treasured secrets to every wanderer who comes impelled by idle curiosity, seeking the bizarre, the fantastic, the supposedly miraculous. But to him who comes hungry for wisdom, in self-abasement, humble in spirit and pure in heart, seeking no external miracles but a truer understanding of his own self and his fellow men, to such the Gods will surely speak and the seeker will depart full of a rare joy. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.'* The Yoga of the Psalmist, the Yoga of the Christ, the Yoga of the Buddha, of Krishna, Zarathustra, Heraclitus, St. Francis, and Sri Ramakrishna is One Yoga, differing only in form and language to suit time and clime. Its pages lie wide open for Everyman to read if he but care and dare. Aristocratic in character, it yet excludes none who has the courage to explore the hidden secrets of his own soul.

He who sincerely seeks to obey the Delphic injunction, 'Man, know thyself, and thou shalt know the universe,' eschewing mere lip service to this titanic challenge, must indeed begin with *himself*, as he is, a physical being through which functions whatever mind, soul, or spirit he may possess. To mount to the highest we must needs start with the lowest. For this we are sent down to the physical plane, not to reject or despise it like the man who buried his talent in the ground, but to use it through the only instrument provided, the physical organism. What scientist would dream of setting out to probe the mysteries of macrocosm or microcosm without first attending to his instruments? This book is an attempt to help Everyman, whoever he may be, at least to refine and if possible to perfect the only instrument he possesses, his body, in order that his mind may perceive with infinitely greater clarity, his spirit soar to unseen heights, and his inner contentment be complete.

* Psalm XXIV, 3, 4.

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2

Varieties of Yoga: The Yogas of Knowledge, Action, Devotion

If the mistake of the adherent of devotional or intellectual Yoga is often to neglect and even despise the God-given instrument through which he works, that of the enthusiast of the physical practices is often to imagine that these in themselves constitute Yoga. This view, frequently met with among westerners, merely displays gross ignorance. The physical practices as such are not Yoga at all, they are mere exercises and gymnastics. True Yoga lies only in the purpose which the physical discipline is designed to serve by providing us with a sensitive, resilient, controlled and balanced nervous mechanism with which to work. To employ an appropriate simile, the devotional or intellectual Yogi who neglects his body is in the position of the pianist or violinist who thinks it a matter of no importance that the piano or violin he uses should remain untuned and in poor condition; while the physical enthusiast who neglects the inner teaching of Yoga resembles a well-kept instrument capable of divine music which in practice is prostituted to vulgar and unworthy ends. The various branches of Yoga are very numerous; I have seen as many as one hundred and sixty tabulated in a single list. They are designed to suit different types of people or for specialized studies as in western science. It is essential to make at least a brief survey of the best known of these varieties, for without any knowledge of them there cannot possibly be a correct appreciation of the place of Hatha Yoga in the general system.

The three primary paths of Yoga are usually said to be those of Knowledge, of Devotion, and of Work or Action—often

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referred to respectively by their Sanskrit names of *Jnana*,* *Bhakta*, and *Karma*.

The branch known as Raja or Royal Yoga, which deals with consciousness, is closely associated with Jnana Yoga. Indeed, all branches of Yoga overlap and at times coincide since they resemble paths leading to the summit of the same mountain from different points. Consequently they may sometimes be strongly contrasted in the initial stages, just as paths leading up a mountain from north and south or east and west start out in diametrically opposed directions. One of the first lessons of Yoga is never to condemn others because their mode of life and activity may differ from our own. 'Judge not that ye be not judged' should be engraved on the heart of every Yoga aspirant. As the Lord Krishna, speaking as an incarnation of the Supreme Deity, says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'By whatsoever path any man approaches me, he is acceptable to me'.† The Lord Krishna, as later the Lord Christ, stressed approach, not path. Formal religion all too often reverses the emphasis, insisting that admission to the Kingdom of God lies only through such-or-such a portal.

The Yoga of Knowledge or Wisdom (*Jnana*) is the intellectual path, the approach to divinity through study, learning, thought and meditation. The followers of this path, known as *Jnani* or practicants of Jnana, regard the whole universe as God-made-manifest, so that accumulation of learning of every kind about it must bring us ever nearer to the divine Source. How true this is is poignantly confirmed today by the pronouncements of our foremost scientists who openly admit that research is forcing them ever closer to the borders of metaphysics and religion. Thus in a B.B.C. broadcast on the Uncertainty Principle in physics, Professor E. N. C. Andrade, F.R.S., frankly admitted that there are causes which are for ever inevitably beyond human comprehension. 'The electron,' he stated, 'leads us to the doorway of religion, but I must not venture further for fear I incur the most bitter of all malice, the *odium theologicum*, the hatred of rival theologians. . . . If I have shown you that today science leads us *to* mysteries, not away from them, it is

* Also sometimes spelt *Gnana* or *Gnyana*.
† *Bhagavad Gita*, IV, 11.

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sufficient.'* The position of the follower of Jnana Yoga, wherever he be and under whatever name he passes, could hardly be better expressed. Would it not often seem as if many of those who formally deny God may really stand very near to Him, while some of those who most loudly proclaim Him—especially professionally—may stand farthest from Him? Be that as it may, the portal to the Kingdom of Heaven chosen by the Jnana Yogi is that of the Open Mind.

Raja Yoga, the close ally of Jnana, may broadly be described as a study of consciousness and mind. This includes what we ordinarily call waking consciousness, intuition, sleep, dream, trance, hypnotic conditions, and all the phenomena of the subconscious. It involves among other things a searching examination into 'personality', to discover what in fact constitutes the 'I' which we are prone to regard as the centralizing element of our psychic being, and to probe the regions that lie beyond it. The reason for the close alliance of Jnana and Raja Yoga is that through Raja Yoga a method is provided to acquire that powerful concentration of mind which is essential to the Jnani in his difficult mental technique. Raja Yoga consists of eight stages which the student will find set out in detail in the third section of the Aphorisms of Patanjali.† Two of these stages consist of physical postures and breath training for both of which preparation through Hatha Yoga is necessary.‡

Jnana Yoga is generally agreed to be the most difficult of all the paths of Yoga, for it rapidly leads us into a maze of paradoxes and contradictions that may daunt even the hardiest intellectual adventurers. Yet, being the path demanding the highest flights of pure thought it makes a strong appeal to intellectual students of the West. Modern physics has revolu-

* *The Listener*, 14th January, 1954.

† Patanjali was the great codifier of the Yoga system. His four books of *Sutras* or aphorisms were written about 300 B.C. A convenient modern translation with commentaries is *How to Know God*, by Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda.

‡ In the introduction to his translation of the *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika* (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar) Srinivasa Iyangar stresses that Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga, far from being antagonistic to each other, are, on the contrary, interdependent. 'The pursuit of Raja Yoga cannot be successfully accomplished without the co-operation of the sister Hatha Yoga. . . . It has also been shown that it is safer to begin with Hatha Yoga.'

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tionized our conceptions of time, space, and creation, which can now only be defined in terms that are paradoxical and often seemingly self-contradictory. This has been the field of Jnana Yoga as far back as history reaches, but the aim of the Jnani is not merely to study but to *live* the utterly new conceptions of existence with which he is confronted. In everything relating to his private and personal life he must not only accept intellectually the modern recognition that nothing is what it outwardly appears to be, he has to penetrate behind the veil and direct every detail of his life from that occult source. He must be a practician, not merely a theoretician.

To give one example, dealing with the problem of time. How many people are capable of living in the *non-existent now*? At first sight this expression seems senseless, but to the Jnani it is one of the gateways to reality. As commonly used, the word 'now' is a vague approximation which we all understand as long as nobody tries to define it precisely. Yet it can easily be demonstrated even by logical reasoning that a precise conception of 'now' is scientifically impossible. If the reader is intrigued enough to try this entertaining metaphysical exercise let him attempt to establish where exactly 'now', or 'the present moment', fits in between past and future. There is no such moment, for future flows into past uninterruptedly and every instant as it arrives becomes a memory. There is no room for any 'present moment'. The truth is that we live all the time in a world of pure imagination consisting on the one hand of memory, which belongs to the past and can therefore no longer be presently existent, and on the other of anticipation, which is memory projected, belonging to a future that has not yet been reached. And since it is logically impossible to be actually living both yesterday and tomorrow, or one minute ago and one minute hence, simultaneously, it can very well be argued that it is logically impossible that we exist at all, we are fictions, and everything we see and hear is a fiction, belonging only to a past which is over or a future which is not yet, but not to anything in between since there cannot be anything in between.

This is not mere mental jugglery. By such logical refutation of logic, which carries us beyond what we usually term logic, we are getting very close to Truth, to Reality, which cannot

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possibly be defined since definition circumscribes and confines meaning within fixed limits. But the Jnani, perceiving our mundane existence in past and future to be unreal and illusory, strives to live consciously in the timeless moment of the present, the moment of Reality, between past and future, non-existent by measurable standards yet the ever-present and eternal NOW.*

Or, again, take the problem of the personal pronouns we use all day long: I, me, you, he, she. What do these words mean? What is it really that we call 'I', 'me', 'mine', whence does it come, how long does it last, and whither does it go? As Omar Khayyám aptly wrote:

> What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?
> And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence?
> Another and another Cup to drown
> The Memory of this Impertinence.

The Yoga philosophy gave a complete answer to this conundrum long ago, an answer to which modern psychology is slowly but inevitably advancing. It is an answer which is clear and irrefutable, yet difficult of acceptance by common standards because it runs counter to the experience of ordinary life in just the same way as the latest findings of science run counter to so many accepted beliefs of a few years ago. In all the ancient scriptures we are told roundly and with great emphasis that the concept of 'I' as commonly conceived is utterly unreal, a product of sheer imagination, and that it is necessary to escape from this unreality and free ourselves from all sense of 'I-ness' and 'my-ness'. What does this mean? The ordinary man guided by common sense is baffled by the suggestion that 'he' is unreal,

* Miss Storm Jameson comes very near this idea in the following passage: 'I believe only one person in a thousand knows the trick of really living in the present. Most of us spend 59 minutes an hour living in the past, with regret for lost joys, or shame of things badly done (both utterly useless and weakening)—or in a future which we either long for or dread. Yet the past is gone beyond prayer, and every minute you spend in the vain effort to anticipate the future is a moment lost. There is only one world, the world pressing against you at this minute. There is only one minute in which you are alive, *this* minute, here and now. The only way to live is by accepting every minute as an unrepeatable miracle—which is exactly what it is—a miracle and unrepeatable.' From *This Week* Magazine quoted in the *Reader's Digest*.

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and feels impelled to dismiss the idea outright as rank nonsense. For what indeed could possibly be more real to each one of us than our own person and individuality which are linked indissolubly to the feeling of 'I', 'me', and 'mine'? What, if not our 'I-ness', distinguishes each of us from others and endows us with the dignity of independent and separate beings?

Yet a little thought will shatter the entire structure and bring it crumbling to the ground. For if it is accepted, even only in theory, that there cannot in actual fact be a 'present moment', then what we see when we look at each other is something which belongs to the past and therefore no longer actually exists. For it is well known that it takes a certain measurable fraction of time for the impressions of the external world to reach the eye, form their imprint on the retina, travel along the optic nerve to the brain and make the necessary impact on the cortex, and finally receive the adequate interpretation which constitutes recognition. It is therefore quite impossible for us ever to see each other precisely as we are, we only see each other as we were a fraction of time ago. On a tiny scale it is exactly the same problem as faces the astronomer who views stars vast distances away; he sees them as they were when the light set out on its long journey, which may have been many centuries ago. For all he knows, as far as viewing them through telescopes is concerned, they may have dissolved or exploded long ago and the star he sees and photographs may no longer be in existence. Similarly we always see the sun not as it is, but as it was about eight minutes ago, and the moon a little over a second ago. In the same way we see each other a little time ago, though the fraction is smaller.

'I', then, can only exist in the past to 'you', and 'you' can only exist in the past to 'me'. Each of us sees something that no longer is, something that belongs to memory, a 'ghost of the past'. How very real a 'ghost', one may well exclaim! Yet since it no longer exists it is as it were a genuine 'ghost', and to that ghost we attach the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.

But let us move the ghost backwards gradually, let us consider the 'I' of yesterday. Was it the same 'I' as today? Surely not. It was very different indeed, for yesterday 'I' had a bilious attack, looked and felt dreadful, in a word 'I' was not myself.

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And if 'I' was not myself, who was 'I'? An unrecognizable and most disagreeable 'I', to myself and everybody else! Or take me as 'I' was a year ago, just before my big business failure. 'I' was buoyant, optimistic, confident of the future, the world looked bright and everything was wonderful. Then came the crash. What happened to 'me'? My 'I'—the same 'I'?—was on the verge of suicide. 'I' was penniless, the world was my enemy, nobody loved me. But wait a minute. Along came that fellow who made me a new offer. We started up in business together with a promising venture, and 'I' felt a new man in no time. And indeed 'I' *was* a new man. Or look further back still. Am 'I' the same 'I' as ten years ago, the same as aged forty, thirty, twenty, ten? Have 'I'—have 'you'—not changed one whit since you were born? The very question is absurd. Every seven years or so each of us has even acquired a new body, the physiologists tell us, while we acquire a new mind almost every instant. My 'I' of today is unrecognizable by comparison with my 'I' of the past, yet we all attach the same pronoun 'I' to ourselves whether at six or at sixty, and ludicrously speak of ourselves as being 'the same person'! What nonsense! We are each of us thousands of different persons in one outer form which itself is constantly changing and often looks quite different in the evening than in the morning, or even within a few moments, according as we are happy or miserable, fresh or tired, well or ill. Then what *is* the same? Where does the sense of identity and continuity arise? Certainly not from the body, or the mind, or the character, or the external appearance, for all of these are changing all the time. Nothing in them is permanent. The only thing that remains the same is the *name*—and that somebody else gave us in the vast majority of cases. So we are forced to ask the old question, 'what's in a name?' That too goes by the board. And what is left? Nothing? Yes, nothing. And that is exactly what 'I' is—or am—Nothing. And yet, where Nothing is, Nothing becomes Everything, so 'I' can with equal justice be said to be Everything! Is it any wonder that Omar cried, 'Another and another cup to drown the memory of this impertinence!'

What then is it that *appears* to be me? The question contains its own answer, the true answer. 'I', to you, am an *appearance*, and 'you', to me, are equally only an appearance. More than

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that, 'I' to myself can only be an appearance, since 'I' to myself am also a thing of the past by the time I have thought of it. The aggregate of impressions composing 'me' takes just as long to be registered and interpreted by my brain as the impressions composing 'you'. I can only be conscious of myself in the past, never in the present, even if there were such a thing as a 'present moment', which we know there is not. So that doubly we are fictions, to ourselves as well as to all around, and nothing is left but appearance. Another word is illusion. So we arrive at what at first appears to be the baffling but inescapable conclusion that our 'I' is an illusion, and therefore everything it perceives is an illusion perceived through an illusion, and nothing is real except the 'appearances' which make up the world around us, including our own selves. And even then we are forced to ask, can there be such a thing as a 'real appearance'? Is it not a contradiction in terms? Not necessarily, for what could be more real than a rainbow, which only appears to be there? With that let us terminate this intriguing intellectual excursion, and perhaps we can discern a glimmer of reason in the ancient dictum of a Vedic sage, that 'Truth (that is, truth as we ordinarily employ the word) is an illusion, and illusion is a truth'.

In the philosophy of Yoga this is known as the doctrine of *Maya*, a word which is usually translated 'illusion'. Illusion is not really a satisfactory term because of its derogatory connotations, but there is no single exact word for *Maya*. 'Sensorial reflection', though clumsy, may be nearer the mark, the world being to our observation a reflection of our senses. So it is in the sense that all our ordinary knowledge is derived from sense impressions, which are notoriously defective and fallible, that the world is said to be illusory. Similarly, when we see our reflection in a mirror we know it is only an illusion, and yet as an appearance it is very real. It is this dual and apparently contradictory use of the word 'real' that we must bear in mind in order to grasp the meaning of the term *Maya*.

This doctrine teaches the same truth as philosophers and scientists have taught us down the ages and today are confirming more emphatically than ever that things are not what they seem, nothing is what it appears to be. There is no clash between the ancient and the modern, but the ancient has been saying it

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for thousands of years. Any person of average intelligence can follow this reasoning and intellectually perceive the truth of it, but the Jnana Yogi has to *live* it, making these concepts his only reality.

How difficult this is in practice may be tested by anybody who cares to try. For if everything we experience is only an appearance belonging to the past, then what is pain? Yet in this as all else, to the Jnani the line of reasoning allows of no deviation. If 'I' am an illusion belonging to a past that is over, then equally every sensation and emotion that 'I' experience is equally unreal, since it slid into the past the instant it appeared. So if I suffer from toothache, for instance, that too cannot but be an illusion, for it exists only in my memory, that is to say my mind or my imagination, and my imagination itself can only be an appearance belonging to a past that no longer exists. The fact that pain is illusory is borne out in the experience of each one of us at least to this extent, that it can often be dispelled (or apparently dispelled which is exactly the same thing) by distraction; a more powerful focus of attention, of pleasure or surprise, may completely obliterate the sensation. This is the technique of the hypnotist, or of the self-hypnotist which we all are whether we appreciate the fact or not. The Jnana Yogi probes yet deeper still and discerns that the nature of everything is the same, it is *all* illusory. But it is one thing to discern this intellectually, and it is a very different thing to act up to it, to make the theoretical implications of it one's only reality. The spectators at a sporting event often possess a thorough understanding of the game they are watching, yet they might make a very poor showing in the field. The Yogi must become the expert player who graduates through severe discipline and gruelling tests to mastery of the technique of a game that never ceases.

The implications of this teaching are more sweeping than the mere denial of pain or discomfort; they affect the total operation of cause and effect as it applies to the world of illusion which we accept as real. If the perfect Jnani can make appearances disappear, he can also make them appear. Before our eyes he becomes the supreme illusionist. We need not pursue the implications further as this is intended to be merely a cursory survey of the subject. Everything is relative. If we can learn to

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master our sensations and emotions in even a moderate degree we shall be doing very well to begin with. Even after fully appreciating the fictitious nature of our personality and all our experiences we shall still be faced with a struggle of immense difficulty if we aspire to break all our chains of ingrained lifelong habit and custom. It is indeed so infinitely easier to slip back into the world of illusion in which it is our fixed habit, and that of everybody around us to dwell, calling it real.

These are only two examples of the 'mysteries' of Yoga. In the end there is no mystery except the final mystery of why Creation should be. But the path is strewn with what appear at first to be mysteries, paradoxes, impossible contradictions, which are resolved only when one raises one's level of consciousness from this plane to a higher. All scientists and philosophers pursue this quest, and some reach that higher plane. After all, many accepted axioms on which geometry and mathematics are based are recognized to be pure fictions. Mathematics constantly calculates in terms of infinity which is inconceivable to finite minds. The first axiom of Euclid is absurd; it states that a point is that which has position but no magnitude. Yet, in the logic of space-time, that which has no magnitude does not exist and therefore can have no position. And the second is equally absurd. It states that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. Yet every schoolboy is now taught that the universe is 'curved' and that the shortest distance between two points on the globe cannot be a scientifically straight or level line since it is a segment of the curvature of the earth. The usual definition of a line as that which has length but no breadth is equally absurd. Yet these facts do not prevent us from making use of these fictions, indeed for practical purposes we could not possibly do without them. The point we have to note and constantly bear in mind if we are to discern anything deeper than the superficial is that they *are* fictions. One of the greatest contemporary mathematicians, Bertrand Russell, has somewhere defined mathematics, which is supposed by many to be the most exact of sciences, as 'a subject in which we do not know what we are talking about'. Again, in a broadcast recorded in *The Listener** he reminds us

* February 1950.

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that all four fundamental concepts of Newton on which modern physics was built have now been swept into limbo, and he makes the striking statement that the only real knowledge we possess is that 'in our heads'—that is, in our imagination—while the whole of the outside universe can only be 'inferred'. But it is one thing to appreciate this intellectually and a very different thing to live in a state of consciousness in which the apparently absurd and impossible is the true and normal, providing the standards by which one's whole being is guided. It is this that the Jnana Yogi strives to achieve by intense and concentrated thought, introspection, and meditation. Even the first step on this path, a purely intellectual comprehension of the fictitious nature of all our values, opens the door to vistas of a new kind of understanding. To the man who can make his heart and not merely his head the home of this understanding the whole of life takes on a new meaning. No longer can he fall a prey to the joys and sorrows, pains and griefs, cares and anxieties of the world. He is truly in the world but not of it. He views all phenomena, including his own self, as an observer. He sees life as a stage show in which he can join or from which he can stand aloof as he pleases. He is above the world. He is free.

We have purposely spent some time on this description of Jnana Yoga, not because Jnana Yoga is more important than any other, but because, as we have said, it is the direction in which western scientific thought is moving.

The second of the primary paths indicated earlier, that of Devotion (*Bhakta*), is just as important and certainly very much more popular, for it does not demand the same intellectual equipment as Jnana and is consequently open to a far greater number of devotees. Bhakta Yoga is the approach to God through worship, adoration, self-abnegation. It is the path of the visionary and the poet, of all the great mystics and saints in all religions. St. Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart in Germany, Pascal in France, and William Blake in England are examples of great *Bhakti*, though they also displayed, as did later Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter, the understanding of the Jnani. The student of Bhakta contemplates God primarily as Love. Though this path is open to a greater number of aspirants than Jnana Yoga, this does not mean it is any easier when

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practised sincerely, for it also requires a total denial of worldly values, and few people are capable of such utter self-abnegation. Its dominating impulse is love—love of God and of all His creatures.

Bhakta Yoga is the most widespread form of Yoga in India, for to those of a devotional and aspiring mind it provides the obvious alternative or supplement to traditional religious forms. Throughout the length and breadth of the land innumerable *ashrams*, societies, and groups of students gather for readings and study, generally with *bhajan*, *kirtan*, and *puja*—worship, song, and ceremony—the form of ceremony depending upon whether the leader is a devotee of this or that cult or aspect of the Deity. It is common practice to open any lecture or discussion on philosophic subjects with a short service of song. The usual instrument providing the musical accompaniment is a small portable harmonium on which the leading singer plays with one hand while he blows the bellows with the other. The sound is not agreeable, it is reedy and nasal and monotonous, and it is very doubtful whether this ubiquitous instrument contributes to the æsthetic quality of the chant whatever value it may have in supporting the general sing-song. The leaders of these groups may call themselves *swami*, *guru*, *acharya*, *sadhu*, *pundit*, or any other of the many terms applied to teachers of religion or philosophy or one who follows a religious path as a calling or profession.* The choice of title may be decided by the leader himself or may be conferred by his followers, who often apply a still more exalted appellation such as *mahatma* (great soul), or *maharaja* (great ruler). Or he may simply be addressed paternally as *papaji* or equally familiarly as *dadaji*, engaging modes of address which may perhaps best be translated 'familiar grandpa', though in this translation the appellations lose their simplicity and charm.

Unfortunately Bhakta Yoga is easily abused, for it imposes none of the inescapable disciplines of Jnana, Hatha, or Karma Yoga. It is liable to become the outward refuge of many who seek to salve their consciences at least with association with those

* *Swami*, *guru*, *acharya* are commonly accepted titles of philosophic or religious teachers. *Pundit* is also a learned man or teacher. *Sadhu* is usually translated 'holy man'.

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engaged in devotional practices. At the same time it must be admitted that many may have drifted into religious associations out of sheer curiosity, and there, perhaps to their own surprise and benefit, found the comfort and solace they had unconsciously been seeking. The real weakness of this form of Yoga lies in the fact that it can so easily be exploited by any clever adventurer with a glib tongue, a sanctimonious manner, and a smattering of the scriptures. Bhakta is the only Yoga the vast majority of the Indian populace know of, and it is not surprising if their ignorance is often exploited. The mob is easily deceived by the external trappings of the *sadhu*. On the other hand, among the educated section of the populace one comes across many who regard themselves as very sincere Bhaktis who would undoubtedly serve God better if they paid less attention to their *bhajan* and *puja* and studied how to eat more sensibly and keep their lungs and bowels in a better condition.

The path of work or action (Karma Yoga) is the approach through work, activity, enterprise. It appeals to many to whom the path of Jnana is closed and the path of devotion appears a waste of useful time that might have been spent on more practical objectives. It is the path, for instance, of the welfare worker, the mechanic, the inventor, the politician, the business man. Though they may never have heard the word Yoga, in so far as they perform their labours disinterestedly, primarily for the sake of doing a job well with a view to the general good, they are acting in a Yogic manner. Karma Yoga is the Yoga of the man of action inspired with an ideal. The aim of its discipline is often said to be simply 'skill in action'. It is, in fact, defined as skill in action in the standard bible of Yoga, the *Bhagavad Gita*.* The word *karma* is often thought in the West to mean fate. *Karma* literally only means action. But this obviously includes action and reaction, cause and effect, hence it may sometimes be used to suggest reward or retribution, or the fate that one builds up for oneself. In the strict meaning of the word any action whatsoever, even the moving of a finger, is *karma*.

* *Bhagavad Gita* means literally *The Divine Song*, and is variously translated as *The Song of God*, *The Song of the Lord*, or, in the sublime translation in verse by Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial*. This ancient bible, composed in verse about 300 B.C., contains the fundamental principles of the teachings which Christ later proclaimed in new terms.

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And so also is *not* doing a thing, since to refrain from doing a thing is also doing something. Thinking, sleeping, loving, hating, are all forms of doing, and therefore are *karma*, and by the laws of cause and effect produce the results which are sometimes referred to as *karma* in the derivative meaning of the word. Karma Yoga is therefore a study of how to do all things well, to best advantage all round, it studies causes and effects and seeks to execute even the smallest deeds with skill and perfection. When this is done, then *karma* in its secondary sense of reward or punishment—good or bad *karma* as the expression goes—can be safely left to take care of itself. The most appropriate scriptural motto of Karma Yoga might well be the words of St. Paul: 'Whatsoever thou doest, do it as unto the Lord.' Which of course enriches the Karma aspect of action by adding the Bhakta element.

An important aspect of Karma Yoga is the economy of energy. Like small leaks from a tank, energy is often frittered away in a great number of unnecessary details. Impatience, fidgeting, fussing and worrying, venting feelings regardless of whether any useful purpose is thereby served, all such actions and attitudes result in much waste of nervous energy and engender an atmosphere of unrest and disquietude. The 'leaks' may appear small and insignificant, but 'many a mickle makes a muckle'. Karma Yoga teaches us to regard such behaviour as more serious than may appear on the surface because of its cumulative loss of energy. Karma Yoga studies how always to obtain the maximum of result with the minimum of effort, much as a sound financier studies to secure the maximum of return from the minimum of investment. Energy is thus economized and a reserve built up to face emergencies. The same principle applies in speech and thought, especially one's thoughts about others. Habitual fault-finding, or the habit of seeing the dark side of things rather than the light, are serious energy wasters. The person who at any slight mishap exclaims 'Oh, my God!' is actually adding to the misfortune by emphasizing it, instead of engendering positive forces by a cheerful spirit that makes light of little things that go wrong. To sum up, Karma Yoga applies the principle of 'skill in action' not merely to the large matters that enter into our daily life, but also—

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and perhaps especially—to the small details that go to compose the large, down to the tiniest thought and reaction. For 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he'.

These are generally regarded as the primary paths of Yoga. As will be seen, they overlap and are at times indistinguishable. The difference lies in the stress laid on the respective approach. In Karma Yoga the stress is on work and activity; in Bhakta Yoga on worship and devotion; in Raja Yoga on consciousness and thought; in Jnana Yoga on learning, knowledge, and wisdom. Every worker of any kind, in so far as he is dedicated to his labours and performs them primarily for the sake of doing them well and for the common good, is thereby also practising devotional Yoga; every devotee of Bhakta Yoga by virtue of the activities that emerge from his worship is thereby practising also Karma Yoga. Though the approach at the outset may appear very different according to the stress, in the end they all meet at the summit of the same mountain however contrasted their starting points may have been.

Of the many other divisions of the subject two of the most important are Mantra Yoga and Laya Yoga. Mantra Yoga is the science of sound and vibration, these being different aspects of the same thing. It includes a study of chanting and incantation, the repetition of sacred formulae, and the effects of these on mind and emotions. The term Laya Yoga is variously translated by different authors, but is broadly a study of the subject of energy, particularly in the human organism and the mystery of the life force in all aspects such as bodily heat and sexual power.

The finite nature of the human mind precludes it from grasping the totally abstract, attributeless, or that which is both existent and non-existent at the same time. We are therefore compelled to imagine the Deity within the narrow confines of our limited mentality; it is only in the thought-stilled state of profound meditation that we approach a realization of that which can be interpreted only in terms of Silence, Stillness, the 'Nothingness' of Meister Eckhart which is 'Everythingness', the Peace which passeth understanding of St. Paul, the Void and Nirvana of the Buddha, the Existence-non-existence

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(*sat-asat*) of the Vedas. It is for this reason that those wise ones who devised the techniques of Yoga realized that the start of the journey must be made not with fixed or dogmatic rules but according to individual temperament and capacity, and that consequently the paths are numberless by which the Deity may be approached.

The justification—and the necessity—of Hatha Yoga lies in the fact that the physical organism is involved equally in every one of the above, for the body is the only instrument provided by our Creator with which to do anything whatsoever on this physical plane of existence—even to exist.

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3

The Secret Doctrine of Yoga

In the metaphysics of Yoga one of the most frequently encountered terms is *Kundalini*. We shall examine the meaning of this word in some detail, but for the moment it may be taken to indicate the sum total of man's powers and potentialities of whatever nature, latent or revealed. The term is often misinterpreted and misused. In popular books on Yoga it is usually associated only with so-called occult or psychic powers. It is characteristic of the herd that it loves to be mystified yet has no thirst for real knowledge. A clever conjurer can always count on a good fee from gaping onlookers as long as he does not reveal the secrets of his art; show them how the tricks are done, however, and they quickly lose interest. Yet to the thoughtful mind this is really the most wonderful part of the matter. Strictly speaking, when the inner meaning of things is sought, everything is occult. Who can explain existence? It is an absolutely occult phenomenon. And therefore everything embraced within it is equally occult. All thought is occult, scientists are still trying to find out how it takes place. What could be more miraculous than the working of our own bodies? But these things are too commonplace for the vulgar mind to perceive them as miracles. The crowd takes the marvels of life for granted, as animals do. The common man of this age has lost the capacity for wonder. His mind is coarsened by materialism. Our not very distant forefathers would have worshipped as a magician—or perhaps burnt at the stake as a sorcerer—any man who caused a small box to speak and sing by simply turning a knob, but to their present-day descendants a radio set is little more than an article of household equipment.

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We shall indeed find the *Kundalini* a subject brimming over with wonders, but they are the wonders of life itself and should not be debased by being classed with what I have termed elsewhere the circus stunts of the esoteric world, such as the ability to see through brick walls or stick knives through one's cheeks or be buried and emerge smiling a month later. These also are manifestations of *Kundalini* for the simple reason that everything that appertains to any kind of human ability in any sphere is a manifestation of *Kundalini*. Its miracles are not confined to what may be, they include what is. The electricity that lights a pocket torch is essentially the same as the electricity that destroys by lightning, but how many years of study and research preceded its harnessing and control for useful purposes? It is similar with *Kundalini*. Books or pundits who start off with what they call Kundalini Yoga and hold out prospects of an early awakening of occult powers should be regarded with grave suspicion. They bring the subject into disrepute.

The word *Kundalini* means literally 'coiled up', as a serpent coils up in sleep. For an understanding of this appellation we must turn to the origin of the great variety of names found in ancient eastern symbolism.

As we pointed out at the beginning of this book, the composers of the Vedic hymns and the authors of the *Upanishads** envisaged Ultimate Reality as One, undifferentiated, ineffable, and nameless. Yet by reason of the limitations of our mind it is impossible for us to reason without language; our first requirement of any thought, idea, or object is that it shall be named and defined, however inadequately, yet with sufficient clarity to enable us to understand each other in speech. The dilemma was summed up by the ancient *rishis* in this all-embracing statement: 'Reality is One, sages call it by various names.' With this in mind the diversity of terms need no longer cause bewilder-

* The word *upanishad* has come to mean commentary, though derivatively it means 'gathered around'. In olden days, when there were as yet no written records and philosophic instruction was always by word of mouth, pupils gathered around their teacher to hear his explanations and comments. The *Upanishads* that have come down to us are condensed records of this oral instruction imparted when the students were 'gathered around'. A vast literature has grown up about them, for they themselves are in brief and often cryptic form. Nevertheless, on account of the even more cryptic forms of the original Vedas, the *Upanishads* are in many respects the most valuable part of Vedic literature.

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ment; indeed to the mind that remains open and receptive this diversity constitutes one of the delights of a critical study of comparative philosophy and religion. Reality, or Truth, is usually dramatized as Deity, and the Deity is given human names such as Brahman, Tao, Krishna, Jehovah, Zeus, Allah, God, Dio, Bog, or ten thousand other forms of nomenclature according to tongue, time, clime, race, circumstance, tradition, and imagination.

The ancient Indian pantheon is the richest in the world and almost limitless, for God is seen in limitless varieties of forms, but in modern times, when religion has sunk also in India into gross superstition, the origin of many of its names is remembered only by scholars and the truly devout. Some of these names have a very practical application in the study of the metaphysics of Yoga. The first division of Reality or Existence writ large is perceived to be into the three aspects of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction (or Transformation). Everything appears, endures a certain time, then is destroyed or rather undergoes transformation, for it is only the form that disappears. In the Hindu pantheon these aspects are personified as Brahm, Vishnu, and Shiva, Brahm being the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer or Transformer. This trinity constantly reappears in later religions as they move westward, but with diminishing clarity, until in the official Christian religion all sense is lost in the casuistic nebulosities of conflicting creeds. In the Hindu pantheon other aspects of divine manifestation are expressed in scientific terms, sometimes personified, sometimes not. Thus, when contemplated as the insubstantial essence that pervades all universes the Ultimate Power or Reality becomes *Akasha*; as eternal soul it becomes *Atman*; as the warp and woof of the apparent substantial universe it becomes *Prakriti*; as the rhythmic pulsation which constitutes Life it becomes *Prana*; and as Life manifested specifically in the physical body it becomes *Kundalini*. All these are really the same, differing only in aspect or imagined function, just as creation, preservation, and transformation differ as aspects of their essential unity, or, to use their personified symbols, Brahm, Vishnu, and Shiva differ as aspects of Brahman; or again, to apply the trilogy more familiar to the

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West, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit differ as components or aspects of the One in Three and Three in One. *Kundalini* is often referred to as a goddess, she is, as it were, the consort of *Prana*, by whom, as we shall shortly see, she has to be awakened after long sleep, just as the Sleeping Princess was brought back to life by her Prince Charming. Incidentally, many traditional fairy tales are expressions of metaphysical conceptions clothed in picturesque symbolic terms.

It is sometimes suggested that *Kundalini* is an electric force or is identical with electricity. It may be so, but until we know more exactly what electricity is it is difficult to say with certainty. *Prana* also is stated to be electricity, with positive and negative aspects. Several attempts have been made both by oriental and occidental scientists to identify *Prana* and *Kundalini* with natural forces recognized by the West or with specific organs or functions, but none of these attempts has led very far. *Kundalini* certainly represents a force rather than any organ, although its control is effected through the manipulation of physical organs.

As already stated, *Kundalini* is represented by the symbol of a serpent. This is significant in more than one respect. In the story of Adam and Eve the serpent is the spirit of evil, and it is still often so associated in the popular mind. But Jesus used the serpent as a symbol of intelligence and wisdom. In sending forth his disciples to preach he enjoined on them to be '. . . wise as serpents and gentle as doves'.* To Adam and Eve, representing positive and negative poles in creation, the serpent revealed the secret of good and evil, learnt by partaking of the fruit of the tree of life. In ancient mythology the brain and spinal column are symbolized also by a tree, called the *asvatta* tree, which grows downward, that is earthward, instead of upward and heavenward; its root is the brain, its trunk the spine, its boughs and leaves the branches and ramifications of the nervous system. According to legend, when God created man He made him in His own image, and the whole power of creation was lodged in the brain at the crown of the head. This point is known as the *sahasrara*. The fall of man was symbolized by the growth of the tree of life downward until, when its growth had reached its limit its power came to a standstill. In the course of

* Matthew, X, 16.

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growing downward man lost one by one those divine powers with which he had been endowed, until, when the tree had grown to its full inverted stature, the memory of his divine origin was dimmed almost to extinction. Now, in his present state, he lives only in the light of knowledge acquired from without through the surface sensitivities of the tree, in other words from impressions gathered by the senses from that external world which he takes to be real because he has become blind to the world of reality within. This is his 'fall'. His slavery to this externally polarized vision constitutes 'sin' and leads inevitably to suffering since he becomes the prey of forces beyond his control. Not until he reverses the direction of his vision will he rediscover, quite literally, the kingdom of heaven that is only to be found within. Redemption lies in retracing his steps, and the pilgrim's progress consists in finding the way back to his divine home. But that arduous journey, which is depicted in symbols in the myth and allegory of all religions, in Yoga is reduced to realistic terms applying to the conditions of our daily life; for if 'sin' lies in a very real sense in the body, so also does virtue. 'By what men fall, by that they rise,' says the Kulinarva Tantra, disclosing with this aphorism one of the most profound secrets of Yoga development.

Meanwhile the goddess of supreme knowledge, the spirit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, when the impetus of the downward growth was exhausted, fell asleep at the base of the spine, where she resides. She is called *Kundalini* because she is described as lying 'coiled up' there, awaiting the moment of reawakening to return to her home in the crown, in other words to return to Paradise whence she was cast out after acquainting the positive and negative forces—the two aspects of *Prana* personified as Pingala and Ida—with their hidden powers, so easily abused. *Kundalini* therefore stands for that Divine Power, imbued with all wisdom and knowledge, which is the birthright of man but which he has lost through separating himself from his root and origin, the Divine Source from which he sprang.

The goddess is not dead, however, she merely lies dormant. This is why every man, even the worst reprobate, is still potentially divine. And even in her sleep the goddess operates. Life as we know it is, so to speak, the remnant of her activity, a mere

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reflection or residue of the vast and inconceivable powers with which the coiled up goddess is truly endowed. These powers are man's heritage if he will but learn how to seize it.

Some scholars, perceiving the reality of this hidden force, regard it as entirely good, others as entirely evil. It is of course neither, any more than electricity or any other force can be spoken of as entirely good or evil. It depends how it is applied. Is electricity evil because people are killed by lightning? Is nuclear knowledge evil because it may be used for destructive purposes? 'There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so.' The knowledge of good and evil imparted to Adam and Eve—or shall we say Pingala and Ida—was the power of discrimination. Its use can only be learnt by experience. A man who never makes mistakes never makes anything. 'By what men fall, by that they rise.'

Although in the course of his fall man was deprived of his divine powers they were not lost for ever. They were gathered at certain points, at certain stages of the descent, and there they remain hidden, like buried treasure, to be reclaimed when he embarks on the laborious ascent back to his pristine estate. The points are indicated approximately in the human frame though they cannot be identified with specific organs. They exist in certain regions, designated symbolically by circles or wheels which are referred to by the Sanskrit word for a circle, *chakra*. There are seven principal *chakras*, with numerous subsidiaries. The seven principal ones, in ascending order, are *muladhara*, *svadhisthana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *vishuddha*, *ajna*, and *sahasrara*. They are shown in the accompanying illustration, a diagram that has been handed down traditionally from ancient times. The approximate location of each *chakra* is also indicated.

It is difficult to speak with precision on this subject because of its abstruse nature and the Sanskrit vocabulary that has to be employed to deal with phenomena that are not yet recognized in western medicine or physiology. In his monumental work, *The Serpent Power*,* which deals exhaustively with *Kundalini*,

* *The Serpent Power* by Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon), published by Ganesh & Co., Madras. Sir John Woodroffe was for thirty years judge of the High Court of Bengal and later Reader in Sanskrit at Oxford University. He has translated, with commentaries, numerous abstruse texts dealing with Tantrik lore that had hitherto defied translation. The word *Tantra* means 'that by which knowledge

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Sir John Woodroffe states that a 'description of the *chakras* involves in the first place an account of the western anatomy and physiology of the central and sympathetic nervous systems; secondly an account of the Tantrik nervous system and *chakras*; and lastly the correlation, so far as this is possible, of the two systems on the anatomical and physiological side, for the rest is in general peculiar to Tantrik occultism'. Another authority, C. W. Leadbeater, in *The Inner Life* (also quoted by Woodroffe), describes the *chakras* in more recondite terms as 'vortices of "etheric" matter into which rush from the "astral" world the sevenfold force of the Logos bringing divine life into the physical body'.*

The *chakras*, having stored up the divine powers as they were lost in the course of man's downward involution or fall, are the repositories of these powers until they are restored to the 'prodigal son' returning to the home of his father. As the *Kundalini* is awakened and forced upward by prescribed Yoga disciplines, penetrating each region in turn, the hidden powers, which are man's by divine right, are restored to him. But though they are his for the taking, the taking is not easy. Severe obstacles are encountered, for it is easier to fall than to rise. The journey is vertically uphill, that is, anti-gravitational and anti-worldly in every sense. To become divine man must conquer and subdue his lower nature, indeed it is only in the conquest and subjugation of his worldly nature that true progress consists. Each superior *chakra* represents, as it were, the next kingdom of heaven to the one below, until at last he reaches his original home and rejoins his Father in that final reunion which is the goal of Yoga. The pilgrim's progress is one

is spread', and the *Tantras* are a collection of works expounding the hidden powers of man. Annie Besant says they contain all the secret teaching of Yoga. Like so much else in ancient Indian literature they are misunderstood by pedants and bigots who are incapable of discerning the truth underlying the symbolism in which the teachings are enshrouded; a cause of stumbling to many such, lies in the fact that much of the symbolism is sexual, sex being one of the most potent forces in man's nature and an obvious symbol of creation.

* Each of the *chakras* is said to have its particular colour, odour, musical sound, geometrical form (generally expressed as a lotus with a certain number of petals) and to correspond to a letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. Each also has its subsidiary *chakras*. Only the seven main *chakras* are indicated in the diagram. For further details the student should consult *The Serpent Power*, by Woodroffe.

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of travail and immense difficulty and danger, as indeed in later times Bunyan so dramatically allegorized it, to be embarked upon only after severe probation and rigorous preparation.

The simplest way to understand the term *Kundalini*, then, is as the sum total of all man's revealed or latent powers, these being utterly limitless and co-equal with Brahman or God. Reunion—or reconciliation—lies in fully recognizing this equality or identity, not merely intellectually of course, but by total self-abnegation and complete transformation of one's whole being, rising in very truth to God's estate. The scribes and pharisees charged Jesus with blasphemy because, as they said, he made himself co-equal with God.* Yet this is just what Jesus must have meant, promising the same to all who renounced wordly values and took his yoke—that is, his yoga—upon them. The price is unqualified surrender of self in all worldly aspects, opening the way to self-realization in the divine sense.

The expression 'dormant' or 'sleeping' applied to *Kundalini* is relative, as has already been pointed out. Even dormant she acts. Every manifestation of consciousness as we know it is also an operation of *Kundalini*. She does not lie in a dead sleep. She dreams, and her dreams are our life. In a greater or lesser degree she is ready to awaken in each one of us. Every effort we make to break the bonds of illusion and escape from the thraldom of the senses is a manifestation of her awakening and prods her, as it were, into still further activity. The degree of her sleep or wakefulness differs. To some extent it depends on the innate endowments (*samskaras*) with which we were born; it depends also on the quality of training we received in youth and adolescence; and it depends yet more on the efforts made on this background, or by superseding this background, to penetrate the veil of *Maya* or illusion. All Yogas point the way to this liberation, and the particular path will be selected by the aspirant according to temperament and circumstance. The first role of Hatha Yoga is to provide the aspirant, whatever path he chooses, with the fittest possible vehicle in which to set forth on the fateful voyage, but it also reveals the physiological process of salvation, the steps by which man's fall may be reversed, albeit expressed in terms strange and unfamiliar to the West.

* John V, 18.

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The stages of this progress are referred to in Chapters Four and Five. The first and most essential is the training of character in self-control and restraint in speech and action, a spirit of service and devotion, and the curbing of physical passions and appetites. At the same time the body is to be viewed as the essentially divine vehicle in and by means of which the pilgrimage is to be made. It must therefore be disciplined accordingly. It must first be trained in certain postures or modes of sitting which will allow unimpeded influx of the life force through respiration and free and unhampered movement of nerve currents up and down the spine. Then follow the exercises of *pranayama*, the object of which is to direct the *Prana* to the base of the spine at the chakra called *muladhara* and concentrate it there. This may take a few minutes to achieve or it may take many years, according to the degree of preparedness of the seeker and his success in directing the pranic currents accurately. By mental concentration, aided by physical pressures exerted while manipulating the breath (this is the esoteric purpose served by the remaining *asanas* when prescribed in proper sequence with the breathing suited to the particular requirements of the student) the positive and negative aspects of *prana*, imbibed through each nostril separately to achieve a more intense concentration, acquire greatly increased force and compel the *Kundalini* to stir and re-enter the central canal of the spinal column, known as the *sushumna*, which is the highway back to *sahasrara*, the 'thousand-petalled lotus' at the crown of the head. From the moment of entering the *sushumna* the *Kundalini*, forced upward by controlled practices, mounts from one *chakra* to the next. Again this may be a matter of moments or of years—more often of years. If progress is too rapid the operator may suffer disaster, his whole nervous mechanism may be thrown out of gear. The unknown seas in which he is navigating his human vessel are full of shoals, submerged rocks, violent currents, and other lurking dangers on which the ship may suddenly founder. For this reason he must be under the constant eye of the pilot, his *guru*, who can detect the signs of peril and come to the rescue. Gradually the hidden powers of the body are unveiled, new horizons open up. The circumference of experience expands, vision becomes clearer and more

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extended, hearing more subtle and acute, sensitiveness of the nervous system more intense. Sight becomes clairvoyance, that is 'clear seeing'.

In the standard classic text book of Raja Yoga, the *Sutras* or Aphorisms of Patanjali, the *siddhi* or psychic powers that may be acquired by the pilgrim in the course of his progress include the following (the particular technique by which each is to be developed also being indicated for those who have ears to hear):

Knowledge of past and future.
Perception at a distance.
Knowledge of past lives.
Clairvoyance.
Complete control of all internal organs.
Power to alter the size of one's body.
Supernormal strength.
Knowledge of the cosmos.
Invisibility and inaudibility.
Prediction of the day and hour of death.
Levitation, walking on water.
Transfiguration.
Mastery of the elements.
Ability to enter and control another's body.

and other powers.

The wise instructor warns his pupil against these acquisitions and their employ at the same time as he announces their possible approach. This is for several reasons. They appear fitfully at first and may therefore be deceptive and unreliable. They may be associated with strange and unpleasant sensations which distort their interpretation. But the strongest caution is always against falling a victim to their meretricious attractions and thus being deterred from pursuing the true spiritual path. This is the lesson of the temptation in the wilderness. To fall a victim to the seduction of psychic powers and thus forget the spiritual goal is the fate of many a seeker. Worst of all are the cases where the experimenter has been promised these powers by some dabbling instructor who has perhaps a smattering of knowledge of these practices, or may even have none at all but

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may have simply read about them and encouraged others to experiment. The hook to catch the innocent fish is often baited with the word *Kundalini*, which is offered as an Open Sesame to such things as clairvoyance and telepathy. I have seen sad results in foolish young people who hankered after such powers. Their punishment consisted in having their prayers granted. A young man I knew in London was reduced to a nervous wreck by certain practices that had been recommended to him in a correspondence course of Yoga published by unscrupulous exploiters of ignorant readers. Another, a middle-aged gentleman, sound in body and mind, was recommended to practise alternate breathing in an advanced form by some peddler of occultism, with the result that, to quote his own words, 'my brain suddenly felt as if it had taken fire and was being burnt up'. He fell seriously ill and it took him several months to recover. There are many such cases on record, usually deriving from books by authors with assumed names who amass a fortune by their pretended occult knowledge. At the same time it is as foolish to utter a sweeping condemnation of Hatha and Raja Yoga, as some do, on account of such cases, as it would be to denounce all sport as an invention of the devil because players sometimes suffer serious accident. There is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything, and only the coward shirks adventure for its reputed risks. The proper thing to do is to seek correct guidance and expert instruction, not to criticize senselessly or take refuge behind cowardly fears and misgivings. 'Nothing dared, nothing done' is an ancient adage as applicable here as in any other field. He whose heart is sure and pure will find the right road if he is patient and persevering, and especially if he is utterly indifferent to so-called psychic powers and cares not an iota whether such powers exist or not or whether he is likely to acquire them. In Yoga misfortune befalls only those who seek with the wrong attitude of mind and heart, generally as sensation hunters. Such start out wrong, and their last state is liable to be even worse than their first.

There is a much quoted saying that 'When the *chela* (pupil) is ready, the *guru* appears'. This is often misunderstood. The terms are clear enough, but what is the meaning of 'ready'? Ready for what? Is a person ready for a teacher merely because he is filled

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with piquant curiosity regarding the psychic powers he has heard may be acquired? Alas, many think this quite sufficient readiness! The saying that 'When the *chela* is ready, the *guru* appears' can only be correctly understood when accompanied by its equally ancient counterpart: 'The *chela* always gets the *guru* he deserves.' And *that* will be the punishment of the shallow seeker after sensation, as it was in the instance of the young man I have cited. Both sayings are true and trustworthy, but the person who quotes the first without the second shows scant understanding of what he is talking about. To find a genuine teacher, capable of guiding the *chela* far along the path, may take years of search. This is just as true of India as of any other country, perhaps truer. Of course there will always be institutes and schools and *ashrams* that any passer-by may enter and join in classes of exercises and lectures together with others who are experimenting with Yoga exercises for the known benefits they confer; and of these also it may be said that when the *chela* (that kind of *chela*) is ready the *guru* (that kind of *guru*) is there, and equally that the *chela* gets the *guru* he deserves. This is not to belittle such establishments, much profit may be derived from them. But this is a far cry from finding one of those greater ones who are capable of guiding the *chela* from the bottom rung of the ladder to the top, supervising his every step. Such a one may impose several years of probation on the *chela* before paying the slightest personal attention to him; it is the latter's manner of behaviour and above all the quality of his service that will determine whether he is then worthy to receive his first initiation into the secret doctrines. And it is highly unlikely that any of that special teaching will be imparted to him which might give him potential advantage over others until it is absolutely certain that these abilities will never be abused. The fakirs and so-called Yogis who show off the techniques they have acquired, perhaps by chance (for this is also possible), perhaps by instruction, and exploit them for gain or display without permission always come to a bad end.

An important reason why the premature or inexpert development of the *chakras* is fraught with risk is, to quote Sir John Woodroffe again, that it enhances the mental and moral qualities of the self-operator as these were at the time of the arousing

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of the *chakras*, in other words his character at the time of entering the secret path is confirmed and its traits intensified. If these were negative the result may be a monster or a lunatic. Hence the insistence in every true school of higher Yoga on the prior training of character. If the experimenter has not first purified his mind by cultivation of the moral qualities his last state will be worse than the first. The true student 'who practises this or any other kind of spiritual Yoga does so not on account of a curious interest in occultism or with a desire to gain astral or similar experiences; his attitude in this as in all other matters is essentially a religious one, based on a firm belief in Brahman and inspired by a desire for union with It which is liberation'.*

Five means are enumerated by the sage Patanjali whereby super-normal powers can be attained: (1) by birth, that is through heredity and prenatal karma; (2) by the use of drugs (this is indicated not as a recommendation but as a warning); (3) by mantric practices, *mantra* being the science of sound or vibration, therefore certain kinds of incantation; (4) by devotional and religious exercises coupled with austerities (the 'prayer and fasting' spoken of by Jesus); (5) through concentration and meditation leading to *samadhi*, the highest stage of 'god-consciousness', the goal of Raja and higher Hatha Yoga.

Exceptional psychic faculties may also appear unexpectedly and inexplicably during illness or as the result of shock, in which case they are usually a temporary phenomenon and very unreliable. The advent of such phenomena in the form of visions, trance states, peculiar occurrences resembling those that take place at spiritistic seances, the apparent intervention of supernatural forces, and disconcerting experiences in one's private life which appear in a manner beyond one's control, all these are by no means an unmixed blessing when they lead, as they so often do, to a breakdown of nervous balance and a decline in general health. This is what so frequently happens to mediums. The advantage of achieving psychic development by the graded scientific method of Raja and Hatha Yoga is that the same experiences will appear in their proper sequence under full control of the operator guided and protected by his *guru*, and will not be accompanied by physical derangement or loss

* *The Serpent Power.*

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of health. Furthermore, if the *guru* in his wisdom so sees fit, when the psychic powers begin to manifest themselves he may allow them sufficient scope for the student to be convinced of their reality, but then check them and prevent their further development, especially if his design is that the *chela* shall return to the world to carry on work there for the benefit of mankind and his own spiritual growth. If the *chela* experiences the slightest disappointment at such a decision it is probably convincing proof of its wisdom, for he must learn two most important lessons. One is absolute submission to his master as long as he is under his instruction, and the other is to attach no value whatever either to the powers he has experienced and discarded, and which he would in any case not be allowed to display, or to his own feelings in the matter, for these are a manifestation of that ego which must be sacrificed for the sake of spiritual advancement.

The metaphysic of *Kundalini* is the orthodox secret doctrine of Hatha and Raja Yoga, handed down through the ages mainly by word of mouth and tested and confirmed by many a sage and adept. But in some ways the terminology of the theory of vibrations is more suited to the present age as a means of expressing the same principles. Everything in the universe is now regarded as being in a state of vibration, so that we may say that existence as we perceive it is vibration and vibration is existence. Matter no longer has the meaning it used to have, it is now interpreted in terms of energy differentiated by rates of vibration. Every individual may be said to resemble a musical chord in that he functions at a predominant rate of vibration representing the totality of his being but at the same time is a complex of subsidiary vibrations (or overtones) representing every organ, cell, and function of the body. Every thought and emotion also are the effect of vibration on a subtler level. This must be so if the doctrine of the unity of nature is true. Consciousness itself is finally expressed in terms of vibration. To indicate sympathy between two individuals 'operation on the same wavelength' has already become an accepted expression. The simile of the strings of a musical instrument is again appropriate; it is well known that two strings tuned alike or in octaves vibrate in sympathetic resonance and if one is struck

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the other automatically sounds also. The phenomena of telepathy and thought transference are thus clearly explained. In these terms the expansion of consciousness which results from the processes of Yoga is expressed by extension and intensification of vibration. The 'rousing of the *Kundalini*' is a dramatic event (not necessarily sudden) in this expansion. The 'piercing of the *chakras*' is increasingly dramatic in its consequences, consciousness being expanded at each stage to vibrate in sympathetic resonance with ever finer and finer forces emanating from the ultimate source. Finally the vibrations of the individual 'soul'—the *jivatman* of the *Upanishads*—being perfectly attuned to those of the whole universe, merge in supreme union with that ineffable eternal silence and stillness which is Brahman or God, in which the infinity of infinite diversity becomes identified with the supernal Unity of that Zero which is All, the Nothingness of Meister Eckhart, or Nirvana of the Buddha, which, being Nothingness, is therefore Everythingness. In this sublime picture, crude and inadequate though it must be when confined in the prison walls of words, all the moral precepts of all the great religions are justified: love of one's neighbour because one's neighbour is of one substance with one's own self; the total extinction of ego as inevitably absorbed in the limitless self of Brahman or God; the love of God as Father of all, which was the supreme teaching of the *Vedas* and the Christ. The conflict of religion and science is resolved. They are one. It is only the terms that differ.

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PART TWO

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4

The Meaning of Hatha Yoga

THE word Hatha is derived from two ancient Sanskrit words *Ha* and *Tha*, meaning respectively the sun and the moon. These symbols provide the key to the metaphysical as well as the physical aspects of this Yoga. According to traditional teaching our bodies are, as it were, a replica in miniature of the solar system to which this earth belongs, and certain centres within it correspond to the sun, moon, and planets. Since the ultimate goal of Hatha Yoga, as of all Yogas, is to bring ourselves into harmony with the source from which all creation springs, our physical and mental faculties must be so trained that they shall function with the same ineffable perfection of rhythm and harmony as is observed in the solar system to which we belong and which is, in a very real sense, our Father in Heaven. Hence the name: Yoga of the sun and the moon. As we shall see, these symbols are applied to various functions of the physical organism, particularly to respiration and the sympathetic nervous system. In purely physical terms perfection of health and physique is the first requisite, but the radiant health aimed at is of a far higher order than is ordinarily conceived of, for the objective is always super-physical; the ancient adage *mens sana in corpore sano* is pushed further to include the soul or spirit and every psychic manifestation linked to the operations of the nervous system.

In the West no branch of Yoga is more popular and at the same time more misunderstood than the Yoga of the physical body. Its popularity is due to its insistence on health as a basic principle, yet this is also the chief course of misapprehension,

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for many conceive of it as confined to the acquisition of a superior physique. The folly of some prevalent ideas about it was illustrated not long ago by the picture of a celebrated film actress which was syndicated throughout the world with the caption: 'Miss So-and-so does her morning Yogi'. The picture showed the lady standing on her head propped against a wall. The inference was that what was ignorantly referred to as 'yogi' consists in doing headstands, an exercise which does enter into that branch of Yoga that we are to examine in this book but is not in any way essential. Moreover, a Yogi is not a subject but a person, one who follows any of the various systems which taken together constitute Yoga.

Recognition of a correspondence between physical organs and planetary bodies is implicit in the term 'solar plexus' applied in western physiology to one of the most important of our nerve centres, located in the middle of the body and controlling the vital organs. This plexus is thus admitted to be the 'sun' of the physical organism. As regards the moon, which is related in Yoga to the brain, a connexion between brain and moon is recognized in the West by the use of the word lunatic to designate a person whose 'moon organ', the brain, has got off its course. The solar plexus is the largest and most central of our nerve plexuses, and upon its 'bright shining', in other words its healthy functioning, depends the proper operation of all our vital organs and consequently also the brain. For just as the bright shining of the heavenly moon depends on the bright shining of the sun, so also the bright shining of our brain depends on the healthy functioning of our vital organs. Popular wisdom, indeed, has detected intuitively the close affinity between the quality of our thinking and the condition of our abdominal organs; thus a courageous man is everywhere known as 'a man of guts', good guts, of course, the kind of guts that do not turn upside down at the sight of danger; whereas weak guts tend to produce the timid person, the coward, who experiences his fright first of all in the form of a queasy feeling or spasm in the pit of the stomach. Other popular expressions indicating similar relationships are a 'chicken-livered' person associated likewise with timidity, a 'splenetic' man who vents his spleen on others, and Shakespeare's 'man of my kidney'. 'Bowels

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of compassion' is another picturesque expression pointing to the affinity between abdominal function and emotional reaction.

In Yoga the sun and moon are symbols also of certain modes of respiration. The breath that enters through the right nostril (*pingala*) is called the sun breath and is regarded as positive, while that entering through the left nostril (*ida*) is called the moon breath and is regarded as negative. The life force inherent in breathing is referred to as *Prana*. *Prana* is believed by some scholars to be the same as electricity, especially since it has been established by western physiologists that thought proceeds by electrical disturbances in the brain and spinal cord. In the act of vision 'I' as subject see an object, but what is it that inspires the feeling and conception of 'I'? The source of the 'I-feeling' is the real operative power. It is this force or principle of life that is called *Prana*, and it, not the 'person', is the true doer. *Prana* also, not the 'person', operates the circulation, digestion, and all other vital functions which enable the 'person' to be. Like electricity, *Prana* has always been recognized to have its positive and negative poles. One of the aims of Yoga is to balance these currents in the body, resulting in a state of perfect nervous equilibrium. The connection between our moods and our breathing is a matter of common observation. Everybody knows how the breathing becomes short and stertorous in conditions of fright or anger, while it is slow and regular when our mind is at peace. By learning to control the breathing we can greatly assist the process of controlling our moods.

Nature herself indicates how this can be achieved. When the mind is suddenly beset by fear, alarm, astonishment or anger, Nature provides a spontaneous antidote by impelling us to gasp, an action which immediately checks the dangerous effects of the stormy and uneven breathing. This device consists in taking a quick deep breath and holding it, whereby our courage and self-control are at once reinforced. We are all of us stronger physically, mentally, morally and in every other way when we hold the breath; indeed the injunction to 'take a deep breath' as a preparation for any difficult task has become an item of popular wisdom. It is evidence of the need to study the art of controlling the breath for mental purposes.

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Certain exercises based on such observations are prescribed for controlling our psychic forces. Taken together these exercises are known as *pranayama*, which means restraint of the *Prana* or life force. Because of the intimate connection between the life force and breathing the term *Prana* is often used for breath. *Pranayama*, therefore, while meaning literally control of the life force, in practice becomes control of the processes of breathing.

Except in the accepted use of such terms as 'solar plexus' and 'lunatic', astral correspondences with the human organism are not yet recognized by western science, but that is not to say they never will be. Almost daily new discoveries are being made in biology, physiology, endocrinology, and all other branches of knowledge concerning the body. In the past fifty years text books have been completely rewritten and are constantly being revised. Nuclear physics concerns physiology as much as it concerns hydrogen bombs or interstellar communication, since human beings like everything else are composed of the same atoms and molecules as compose the world around us.

The first step, therefore, toward restoring macrocosmic harmony to the microcosmos of man is to provide for the efficient working of the physical machine on which the efficient working of the mental machine depends. For this the major requirements are a high degree of resistance to disease, regular functioning of the digestive and eliminative organs, a pure and adequate blood supply, a robust heart, disciplined nerves, mental equanimity, and a cheerful spirit. These are the first objectives of physical Yoga. All disease and malfunctioning of physical organs originate from impurities of one kind or another. Hence the keynote of Hatha Yoga is purification. If the blood is impure the brain and nerves and psycho-spiritual life cannot but be affected. On the mental and spiritual planes the purity at which Yoga aims is not that of the conventional moralist, it is the purity and therefore transparency of a spotless window that admits unimpeded the ever-shining light of eternal Truth.

Physical Yoga may be considered from two aspects, either as a special subject in itself or as an adjunct to other forms of Yoga and in general as an aid to the business of living. It is in this

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second aspect that we shall deal with the subject in this book. Advanced Hatha Yoga can only be communicated individually according to the personal requirements of each pupil. It is claimed by adepts who have perfected themselves in this science that by the methods of advanced Hatha Yoga it is possible, granted that a preliminary background of character is firmly established, to attain divinity through absolute purification of the physical system and the gradual raising of its potential of vibration, so that one by one all the occult centres of the body, located in the brain and spinal cord,* are awakened, all hidden powers unveiled, all superphysical planes conquered, and man while still man becomes divine. The number of those who attempt or are capable of attempting this path in its specialized form is very few. It requires exceptional physique and the training can take place only in special circumstances of isolation and seclusion, under *gurus* who are quite unknown to the general public and are very unapproachable.† The discipline must be pursued to the total exclusion of any other activities over an indefinite period and in conditions of secrecy that

* These were detailed in Chapter Three.

† In the introduction to his translation of the authoritative ancient treatise known as *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika* (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar) Srinivasa Iyangar points out that 'the acquisition of a knowledge of this science is fraught with abnormal difficulties; perfectly qualified teachers are rare, and uncommunicative except to well-tried pupils'.

As regards 'exceptional physique', it is important to note that a healthy condition of the body does not necessarily imply great muscular strength. Professional strong men, whose biceps and chest bulge like balloons, are often not really healthy at all. The statistics of longevity are against them. At middle age their excess of muscle begins to degenerate and turn to fat and it is rare that they live to a ripe old age. The criterions of true health are quite different. Endurance and resistance to disease are its outstanding qualities. Part of the training undergone by the present writer consisted in a series of severe fasts, lasting several weeks on each occasion, during which nothing was taken but water with a few drops of lemon juice. Though for the first few days of the fast normal activities were continued, inevitably muscular strength then began to wane, it became necessary to mount stairs slowly and slacken other physical activity. Eventually exercise had to be considerably curtailed, especially as in my case I was always well below standard weight to begin with. Yet I have always considered that never in my life was I so truly healthy as in those conditions. The blood was purified, the nerves intensely responsive, the mind alert, and I would not have hesitated to brave any infection, even of the most contagious diseases, because the condition of the body provided no soil in which infection could take root. This kind of health, dependent on purity of the blood, can exist in a physical organism that is frail and muscularly feeble.

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forbid contact with the outside world, for there must be no distraction. The watchful eye of the *guru* must follow every step along a path that is often perilous, just as a mountain guide watches with an eagle eye every step of the climber whom he has roped to himself. Every detail of the neophyte's life must needs be supervised day after day until the moment arrives to undergo the final tests, which are exceedingly severe. It is a method of make or break in a very real sense. The visible exercises of this training include those taught in the modified form of Hatha Yoga, but they are practised to an almost unbelievable degree of endurance.

To give one example, the common practice of standing on the head which is good for anybody for short periods may be extended to remaining immobile in that posture for several hours at a stretch daily over periods of weeks or months while the mind is concentrated in the particular manner indicated by the *guru*. The breathing and abdominal exercises that are so important a feature of all physical Yoga may run into thousands of repetitions performed with the utmost energy at each practice. It will easily be seen why the Hatha Yoga specialist needs twenty-four hours of the day for his work, his periods of rest being also closely controlled. Although the postures or *asanas* he practises are in general the same as those included in ordinary Hatha study the advanced student rarely goes through a whole lot of them one after another; it is more likely that his *guru* will prescribe very few at a time, but these will be specially selected to suit the student's condition and may have to be concentrated upon for long periods. There are other practices which are of such a nature as not to allow of written description and are in any case differently administered to suit each case, since no two persons are ever precisely alike. Diet, sleep, and leisure are all regulated, and the *mantras* or sacred formulae or prayers indicated for each pupil by the *guru* have to be repeated verbally or mentally at all times. The object of these is to keep the student reminded of his high ultimate goal, for it cannot be too emphatically stressed that although a degree of power and bodily control is aimed at beyond the imagination of the ordinary man and woman, the body is still regarded only as an instrument. The goal of the training is not the ability to show off

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or display unusual powers, but purification, the creation of a machine of the highest possible precision and truth-revealing value on the psychic and spiritual planes, corresponding to the high-precision instruments, delicate and powerful at the same time, constructed by western scientists to probe the hidden truths of the physical world.

In the years of my intensive study of this subject I had the advantage of instruction in the tradition of advanced Hatha Yoga adapted to suit European conditions. Especially it was borne in on me that there can be no divorcing of mental training from physical or physical from mental if both are to attain the highest development. Mental includes our emotional nature, how we think is largely determined by how we feel. I mentioned earlier that advanced Hatha Yoga requires that a preliminary background of character shall be established before a prospective pupil will be accepted, for it is known that certain advanced practices have the effect of reinforcing the existing qualities of the aspirant, whatever these may be. This is the reason why the thoughtful seeker should be cautioned against those who hold out promises of an early acquisition of psychic powers or rapid 'awakening of the *Kundalini*'. These powers should develop gradually according to the student's capacity to receive them. Certain basic principles should be implanted first and the pupil tested while the *guru* observes him. Absolute obedience is expected, a general attitude of unselfishness and honesty in dealings with others, humility, sympathy, and generosity toward one's fellows, and a spirit of service to mankind. Such qualities have a much stronger influence in helping to keep us healthy than most people appreciate. The distinguishing mark of a true school of Yoga is that, together with the physique, it trains the character in these directions, stressing the need for the highest and noblest ideals. Without this, any so-called Yoga school is nothing but a health institute. These may be excellent in their way, but the distinction must be made clear. The grounds for the ethical training are essentially scientific for it is well known that hatred, anger, resentment, and indeed all negative emotions have a detrimental effect on health through affecting the blood and nerves. A kindly and understanding attitude toward all men,

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including those of totally different station or habits of life, is definitely conducive to physical health and well-being, and to say that our lives should be governed by love is to propound not merely a sentimental or religious principle but a strictly scientific one. Certainly none of that special knowledge which leads to the acquisition of occult powers will be imparted by a genuine master until he has tested his pupil in these other fields over a long period. The qualities demanded of the pupils are admirably summarized in Kipling's immortal poem, 'If', and it is difficult not to suspect that in writing those lines Kipling was influenced by contacts established during long years in the East, whether he admitted such influence or not.

The Hatha Yoga taught in open schools and publicized *ashrams* anywhere is not this specialized form but the elementary form of Yoga applicable to all but the disabled. It is more practical and better suited to business and professional people with daily duties to perform whose time is limited but who wish to keep fit and sharpen their mental acuity. It is designed to perfect the general health and increase all-round efficiency. In India many such schools exist. They are mostly regarded as health institutes rather than centres of philosophic study, though some also hold classes for discussion of Vedanta and kindred subjects. Exercise classes are held as a rule in the early morning or after business hours and consist of instruction in breathing, abdominal work, postures, traditional methods of cleansing the nasal passages and bronchial tubes, while some also provide facilities for taking enemas in the proper way. Since the physical and spiritual aspects of the subject are rarely integrated one hears the regret expressed that the teaching of this Yoga in the advertised and publicity seeking schools does not stand on a very high level, expert though the instructors may be in performing the exercises and postures. This lack of integration is one of the most noticeable features of the innumerable *ashrams* and schools throughout India; either the physique is trained with perfunctory regard to the ideals that lie beyond, or else (this the majority) the *ashrams* are composed of religious and philosophic groups practising vocal and ceremonial worship while leaving the body to take care of itself, which it usually does badly. The lack of physical Yoga, adequately presented as

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an integral part of the spiritual teaching, is acutely apparent in many *ashrams* where philosophic and devotional studies stand otherwise on a high level.*

The young moderns who compose the ranks of the Indian civil service and staffs of westernized industrial concerns have lost sight of the treasures of ancient Indian learning. To them Yoga is merely a system of peculiar physical exercises or an exotic cult. There is a sad lack of balance in the study of it. In true Yoga, mind and body are trained equally, as laid down by the sage Patanjali. Fortunately there are some exceptional institutions that adhere to this principle. A shining example is the Sri Aurobindo *ashram* at Pondicherry. There, where the philosophy is of the highest, every ashramite of whatever age is urged, if not obliged, to take part in the physical exercises held in the parade ground every evening, and both men and women are infused with a truly devotional conviction that the maintenance of health is an integral part of the Yoga that is taught at the *ashram*.

The notion that Yoga consists primarily of a system of physical exercises probably arises from the fact that it is always the visible and unusual that most easily seizes the attention of the uninformed. In many minds Yoga is associated with some peculiar physical feats or postures. The *asanas* thus come to

* I have been consulted several times about this in India, quite apart from the lectures under official auspices referred to earlier. On one occasion it was at an institution which claims to have many hundreds of thousands of followers where the devotional atmosphere is marked and the teaching is thought by some of its adherents to excel even the highest Yoga. I spent some time at the largest centre of this cult and within a few days some of the more prominent members who knew of my interest in Hatha Yoga were inviting me to conduct a class for them and even suggesting it would be a good thing if the head of the institution did a few exercises himself! Another occasion was at an *ashram* of Bhakta Yoga of the usual type, where the Guru, a distinguished writer and poet, invited me to give a complete Hatha Yoga demonstration at one of his regular devotional meetings and explain the influence of various exercises on mental efficiency. I received invitations also from educational establishments and clubs, and on one occasion gave a demonstration at a leper colony in the wilds of central India, the head of which had himself been a Yogi recluse for several years but had never learnt to integrate body, mind, and spirit and suffered in physique accordingly. So enthusiastic was he that he insisted on my repeating the performance to a large group of his friends with their wives, some of whom came from considerable distances, but I doubt whether any of them regarded it as anything but a curiosity!

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acquire an exaggerated prominence that is often misleading, and the ability to perform the more complicated ones is often thought, quite wrongly of course, to indicate an advanced degree of Yogic attainment. The *asanas* have their place, but they should be considered only as part of a whole; taken separately by themselves they are mere gymnastics and contortionism. Their value for Yoga purposes depends on other practices with which they should be combined. So far as performance is concerned any trained acrobat can snap into them with ease. The famous lotus posture, sometimes spoken of as the Buddha posture because the Lord Buddha is usually depicted sitting in it—a posture often found difficult by westerners—comes easily to those who are accustomed to squatting or sitting cross-legged from childhood as in the East; it is also easy for equestrians who have stretched their crutch riding horseback and for people with loose joints. In Bombay, Benares, and other places I have seen street performers calling themselves Yogis who tie themselves up in unbelievable knots and perform many peculiar feats. From this to sheer fakirism and revolting practices of self-torture is but a step. These things have no place in Yoga. Precisely the contrary, Yoga seeks to preserve and exalt the physical organism as an instrument of service to God and man; though the physique is trained it is never the body itself for its own sake that is the paramount consideration. Every exercise of Yoga when properly performed is an exercise of mental control. The aim is always to rise above the body, to conquer and subdue it so that it shall become one's slave instead of one's master, not to show off for gain or vanity, but to live more positively and constructively. To confuse the freaks and tricksters of sidewalk and circus with Yogis is as abominable as to regard flagellants and other self-mutilating or orgiastic Christian sects as typical Christians. There is no protection against the abuse of words in the East as in the West. It is absurd to call a man a Christian because he shouts fire and brimstone from a platform in a park, and it is no less absurd to call a man a Yogi because he practises fakirism on the ghats of Benares, lying on spikes, letting his arms wither in the air, sticking knives into himself, walking on burning coals, or displaying any other apparent miracle. These are the circus stunts

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of the esoteric world, and while it is undeniable that what are sometimes called occult powers may be acquired through certain austerities that may in some circumstances be prescribed in Yoga training, the use or display of such powers is invariably discouraged if not positively forbidden, they are warned against as a dangerous snare. When they begin to appear they are to be regarded merely as indications of certain kinds of progress leading to higher and more important things. They are signposts, as it were, and true progress consists in leaving them behind, precisely as we do directional signposts along a road, however paradoxical this may sometimes seem. Supernormal powers have often been acquired by saints and mystics of all religions as the result of austerities and particular kinds of training, but they did not parade them before the vulgar eye or reveal them except on rare occasions.

Distorted ideas regarding Yoga are just as prevalent in India as in the West. The notion that all Indians practise Yoga is as ridiculous as to suggest that all Englishmen or all Americans do. I have read books whose authors in some cases bear Indian names in which fantastic generalizations are made, as if every Indian deserves some kind of halo while the benighted West still wallows in darkness and ignorance. One book by an Indian author which otherwise contains much common sense has this extraordinary generalization: 'The people of the East do not get excited easily, because they, wisely enough, want to use their earthly life for spiritual progress. They shake their heads when they watch their brethren in the Occident shorten the divine gift of life by feverish activity and a resulting rapid shallow breathing.'* The author, being an Indian from Madras, presumably includes Indians in the people of the East. But if there is one characteristic of ordinary Indian citizens as encountered in street, train, bus, hotel, house, and market that strikes one more than others it is their great excitability and their habit of talking very noisily, even conducting friendly conversations in voices that at a distance suggest violent enmity until one approaches close enough to see that they are not about to attack each other but are only chatting. This peculiarity is not confined to one or two of the many different peoples that

* *Yoga and Health*, by Selarajan Yesudian and Elisabeth Haitch.

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compose the Indian nation; I noticed it to be a common characteristic in Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and everywhere else. There are of course numerous outstanding individual exceptions to this prevailing rule, but one usually finds these had a European education, special training, or were natural recluses.

As for the second half of the generalization relating to shortening of life, this is even more absurd in so far as the suggestion is that Indians are exempt from the bad habits indicated. One of the things that strikes an observer studying the country which gave birth to such profound philosophy, is to find these teachings so little practised, particularly those arts relating to improvement of physique and extension of life. The expectation of life in India is the lowest in the world. In 1958 it was fifty-two years. Even among Hatha Yoga practitioners I found it widely accepted that a man at sixty is getting old and expects to be a back number at seventy. Pandit Nehru's stricture about the gulf between Indian profession and practice applies in this field also. I shall not easily forget my surprise in the case of the head of one prominent and widely advertised Yoga institute near Bombay. After treating me to a tirade against his competitors and the Government for not recognizing his unique achievements in Yoga research this gentleman willingly confided to me his age when I asked him. While he talked I had judged him from his looks to be ten years my senior. I was just twenty years out, he was ten years my junior. Similar instances were many.

To the bulk of Indians Yoga is in its broadest sense still a closed book, and the *asanas* appear to them to be as singular an oddity as they do to Europeans and provoke the same kind of curiosity. Protests by serious minded devotees against the prostitution of Yoga for mere display appear from time to time in the Indian papers. The following letter in the *Indian Express*, Bombay, of 9th December 1957, is an example:

> SIR,—Yoga is essentially subjective, meant for self-culture rather than for objective display. No doubt there are certain features of Yoga practice that evoke wide-eyed wonder among laymen. It is, however, a matter of regret that many a Yoga enthusiast demonstrates on the stage in

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the manner of circus tricks a few Yoga practices torn from their context. We feel pained when, over and above this, various crude physical tricks and contortions of the body that have nothing to do with Yoga are mixed up with such Yoga demonstrations. We have, for example, the so-called Yogi who can drink nitric acid, swallow nails, bend iron bars or allow a steam roller to pass over his chest. The audience may be entertained, but it is certain that due to this cheap exhibitionism very few among the spectators would hold a high opinion about this subject, especially when such demonstrations are staged for the benefit of foreign visitors. It is to be hoped that sincere students and promoters of Yoga will do their utmost to discourage such demonstrations. (signed) DINKAR SAKRIKAR.

Possibly the commercialized aspect of most of the advertised schools leads their directors, even if they shun such crudities as mentioned in this letter, nevertheless to stress the more spectacular element of the system which to the popular eye is always the *asanas*, the distinctive visible feature. One of the most widely advertised schools of Bombay cleverly combines Yoga with the sale of hair oil; in his advertisement the inventor is shown seated in the lotus posture with a halo, surrounded by gaping admirers who are significantly depicted as of European mien rather than Indian, and a chart of Yoga *asanas* is sold with the hair oil. Needless to say the haloed 'saint' appears with abundant locks, considerably more luxuriant incidentally than adorned his head on the occasion of my visits to his *ashram*. This establishment also has lectures on philosophical subjects, and (to revert for a moment to the question of excitability) I attended one of these lectures on a Sunday morning and heard a discourse on the *Bhagavad Gita* by a young man whose manner inspired anything but the peace which that classic is intended to instil; his oratory was of the machine-gun type, fired at his audience in a rattling voice with vehement gesticulations. The hirsute director who presided, and who is referred to in some of his literature as 'His Holiness', did not appear to disapprove of this style of harangue and the audience of some forty people were evidently quite used to it.

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Another gentleman gives his establishment the pretentious title of the Yoga University, but when I called there I found it to be a one-man concern in shabby quarters at the top of a shabby staircase, the entire teaching staff and administration consisting of the individual who opened the door to me. He had some good pictures of himself when younger doing postures, but he admitted that he had no classes, his pupils being a few business men after hours. He was fifty-five, but looked ten years older.

I do not wish to suggest that these examples are typical of all public physical Yoga establishments in the country. The schools and private instructors are a mixed bunch but there are some excellent instructors and serious Yoga students among them. It is earnestly to be hoped that the attempt to co-ordinate the work of expert physical instructors will be successful, for India needs physical Yoga at least as badly as Europe does, the general conditions of existence, standard of health and hygiene, and the prevailing level of Indian life being deplorably low. The remark credited to Bertrand Russell that Indian mentality is now at the level of the Middle Ages in Europe is well founded;* as is also Pandit Nehru's observation that in no country in the world is there so wide a gap between ideals and practice. To most educated Indians physical Yoga is still an eccentricity and to the average citizen unknown territory. The true and complete teaching of Hatha Yoga in the ancient tradition is still confined, as it probably always will be, to little known centres which not only never advertise themselves but on the contrary impose a severe prohibition on any publicity. For the rest, if Yoga is often treated merely as a form of physical culture this is better than nothing, for there is no doubt that, taken simply as physical culture, Yoga under an experienced instructor is superior to any other system in the world. As for the *asanas* which figure so prominently in popular books, these have their important place in the system, but in the order of stages in which the subject should be approached they come last, not first. The whole of Yoga can, as a matter of fact, be achieved without them by *pranayama* and abdominal purification, as has many times been done by persons who for special reasons restricted their

* *Among the Great*, by Dilip Kumar Roy.

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practice of *asanas* to the seated postures necessary for breathing and meditation. This is not to lessen the value of the *asanas* but merely to place them in their proper perspective.

What constitutes perfect health? It is as difficult to define as sanity. Health is always a variable principle, and mortality sets a final limit. Modern conditions of life compel compromise and adaptation, so that in practice we are driven to express our practical ideal as the maintenance of the highest possible degree of well-being and efficiency permitted by our constitution and circumstances. The more adverse these are, the greater the need to take timely counter-measures, for if the foundation is insecure all else must suffer. The trouble is that so many content themselves with a far worse compromise than need be, and instead of making their circumstances an opportunity for self-development by battling with them and overcoming them they make them an excuse for slackness and self-neglect. The Greeks at the height of their glory knew how to combine culture of body and mind in such a way as to attain the highest degree of all-round perfection. Their mysteries included exercises similar to those of Yoga. Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato were all trained athletes. Heraclitus about 500 B.C. was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Yoga. But in the West, and especially among Anglo-Saxons, ever since the Puritan period a reverent attitude toward the body has been frowned upon, leading to the pose of moral superiority which still contemplates a natural attitude toward the body with aversion, and it is only in recent times that this odious form of hypocrisy has shown signs of abating. I have also known well-meaning but sadly-misguided students of occultism prone to adopt a disparaging attitude to Hatha Yoga because its special province is the physical body. Some will attend endless lectures and seances and pore over books purporting to expound the mysteries of the cosmos, yet baulk at any effort involving the slightest change in their habits of living, on the excuse of a pretended exclusive interest in 'mind' and 'psyche'. This also is a kind of spiritual self-deception.

I recall a buxom little lady of about forty with a naïve good-natured expression who once came to consult me. She pretended disdain of things physical and material, but her significant

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'middle-age spread' showed clearly enough that her disdain did not extend to the table. She said she was a member of a 'Society for Psychic Advancement' or some such pretentious title, she studied spiritism, astrology, palmistry and similar subjects, and she aspired to perfect herself in those arts of mental concentration and meditation which she had heard might be acquired through Yoga. 'I have seen Raja Yoga described as the royal road of the mind,' she said. 'Can you teach me? And how must I start?'

I suspected that this pleasant little lady belonged to that common category of people who are totally ignorant of their own selves, the structure and function of their organs, living in a world of psychic dreams, pursuing out of curiosity the occult and cryptic rather than the simple and straightforward. I pondered that the best way to help her might be to wrap a truthful answer first in cryptic terms to suit her taste, and work round to her real needs later.

'I do not presume to teach,' I replied, 'but I will tell you what I myself was taught. We start with the sun, the moon, and the stomach.'

She stared blankly. I explained the theory of the sun and moon breaths, the positive and negative division of *Prana*, drawn into the body through the right and left nostril. I showed her a chart of lines of force in the body.

'If you observe yourself,' I pointed out, 'you will find you sometimes breathe more through the right nostril—the sun breath—and sometimes more through the left—the moon breath. The predominance changes over every couple of hours or so. The *Prana* thus drawn in passes downward to the base of the spine. It is a nervous force and intercrosses the spinal cord like the serpents of a caduceus, which is a symbol of pranic forces. At the base of the spine, if these forces are properly manipulated, they enter the central canal of the spine and travel upward to the brain, awakening the dormant centres of the body on the way. And that is the point at which the mind becomes enlightened. This is the process of Raja Yoga.'

'But how do you *do* this?' she persisted.

I thought for a moment what illustration would best suit her. 'The situation is rather like that of a person setting out by

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car on a long and difficult journey into unknown territory. He can if he wishes just jump into his car and drive off, regardless of the condition of his machine. If he is lucky things may go all right for a time, but then one thing after another begins to go wrong, the car was not fit for the unforeseen conditions, it comes to a stop and the traveller is stranded, able to go neither forward nor back. Many foolish people embark on their psychic journeys like that, with vehicles that simply cannot make the voyage. The vehicle in which, willy-nilly, they have to travel, is their body, and they end up physical and nervous wrecks because they thought it was unnecessary to do anything about putting their car in fit condition before starting. It is not enough merely to set out in the right direction. It is just as necessary to travel in the right conveyance, for the journey of the spirit must be made alone, there is no such thing as changing to another car if yours breaks down. It is the only one you have.'

'But if I have a *guru* to guide me?' she asked.

'Your *guru* may show the direction, but do you expect him to drive your car for you? If he did the whole experience would be useless to you. You have to learn to drive yourself. His job is to teach you, and any *guru* who allows you to set out on your journey without first putting your car in a fit condition is a poor kind of *guru*. There are many such unfortunately.'

'And how do I begin putting my car right?' she asked hesitantly.

'This is where the stomach comes in,' I replied. 'To learn how to control the life force within you you must first learn how to breathe to best advantage and how to eat to best advantage, because we take in *prana* also with food. And then we still have to learn how to handle both the air and the food after they are inside us.'

'After they are inside us?'

'I said after,' I repeated. 'What harm can any food do you as long as it is outside you? It is only when the food is inside that it begins to do damage.'

'You are looking at my waistline,' she said guiltily.

'I am. How can you look me in the face and say you despise things physical when you have put all that excess food inside yourself? Don't be so hypocritical.'

'You think me a humbug,' she said.

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'No more than all other unthinking people. You will also have to learn how to think. That is *very* hard.'

'Why?'

'Because when an honest person begins to think for the first time in his life he always feels ashamed at what he finds out about himself. It is a good sign to feel ashamed.'

'What is the first exercise I must do?'

'Get the principle clear first. Practice will come in its proper place. Bear in mind that breath—or *Prana*—is a spiritual force, it is life itself, the same life that makes the sun shine, the flowers bloom, the wheat ripen. But in ourselves it can only be controlled by what we call physical means, that is through proper handling of our body, since our progress takes place on the physical plane. The immediate recipients of *Prana* are the lungs, the stomach and the skin.'

'The skin?'

'Yes, and it has a lot to do with complexion too, which quite rightly interests the ladies. But respiration and control of the abdomen are the first things. Courage is a spiritual quality closely connected with the state of the intestines, the digestive apparatus, the "guts". It is not in his mind that the coward flinches—mentally he knows quite well that he ought not to flinch—but his guts just can't take it, they are weak and he vomits.'

As best I could I explained to her that true spirituality and morality have much to do with the state of the intestines. Not the bogus morality of the stock moralist, of course, nor the outward spirituality of the churchgoer and hymn singer, but the real power of the spirit, the kind of spiritual power Jesus spoke of when he associated prayer with fasting, that is with giving the stomach a complete rest for a time instead of stuffing it several times a day year in year out.

'In Yoga,' I told her, 'whether you call it Raja or Hatha or any other kind of Yoga, you must learn to think of eating and breathing not merely as physical but as spiritual functions. In the end there is no difference between physical and spiritual except as aspects of one and the same thing. Breathing always comes first of course because we perish if deprived of it even for a few minutes. Do you ever read the Bible?'

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The author photographed (*above*) in the Himalayas and (*below*) with three anchorite friends in a Himalayan monastery

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The author taking part in two contrasting Yoga demonstrations: (*Above*) with two pupils in a television programme and (*below*) at a country hospital in Central India

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I opened it at the Gospel of St. John, chapter xxii, and read out verse 21: ' "Jesus *breathed* on his disciples and said, Receive the *holy spirit*." The very word spirit means breath, it comes from the Latin word *spiro*, which means "I breathe", and the word breath comes from the Sanskrit word *Brahman*, which means God. This is the key to the scriptures. Meditate on this and you will understand more than from a thousand books or sermons.'

This lady had sufficient enterprise to take herself in hand. At my classes she learnt how to breathe properly, studied her internal anatomy sufficiently to begin to understand her own self for the first time, acquired the ability to control her figure, and learnt how to eat in such a way as to enjoy her food far more than she did before, yet without putting on weight. In six months she was a very different woman. If she had any complaint it was a happy one—she had to have all her dresses refitted! She brought other members of her society but they did not all display the same sense and application as she did, for it is characteristic of many who pride themselves on being students of occult or psychic subjects that having seized hold of the staff of self-knowledge they will do anything rather than stop to examine whether they grasped it by the right end.

I was conducting periodic discussion evenings at that time to which this lady brought her husband and friends. Some of the questions they raised were very pertinent. It was argued, for instance, that some people acquired spiritual enlightenment not through cultivating better health but as the result of severe illness or at the approach of death.

'I had a relative,' said one lady, 'who had a vision when she was very ill. She said she had been transported to heaven. She was near death at the time, but she recovered and was a much better person afterwards.'

I readily agreed that such cases occur, but can they reasonably be put forward as an argument in favour of falling ill and nearly dying? Accidents and disasters often turn out to be blessings in disguise, but does this justify courting misfortune? Many, perhaps most, people can only be torn from the rut of habit by some kind of shock. To have their conventional ideas turned upside down is the best thing that can possibly happen to them for their mental and spiritual growth. There is no more

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pernicious habit than that of taking existence for granted. We have no right to take anything whatsoever for granted.

I have always regarded it as quite unimportant whether people are convinced or not by argument and discussion. The important thing is at all costs to start them thinking on some new and unaccustomed line—any new line rather than none—and let them work it out by themselves. My students have also sometimes argued that great mystics and saints of history took no measures to protect their health or develop their physique, and therefore Hatha Yoga must be unnecessary. 'They often neglected their bodies and took no care of themselves at all.'

'You too are at liberty to try that path if you wish,' I would reply. 'But then you must also live as those mystics did, and if you study their lives you may find that their mode of existence was very different from ordinary people. Generally they subsisted on a sparse and meagre diet. Do you? Saints who lived on almost nothing, and that of the simplest, did at least protect their physical health by avoiding the evils of wrong eating. By their austerities they might even raise themselves to a superior state of health. Austerity can of course be overdone like anything else, but they were more likely to benefit in health by restraint than by eating three big meals a day.'

'But they never bothered about breathing exercises, they never thought of doing headstands or Yogic postures!'

'Probably they never did think of such things, yet they may have done something very like them all the same.'

I had given some thought to this aspect of monastic and saintly lives. When I was young I used frequently to attend services in Russian cathedrals and visited several monasteries in different parts of that country when I was living there. I saw then that the chanting of orisons must often be a valuable form of respiratory exercise through which blood, already rendered pure by simple diet, was better oxygenated, while frequent obeisances must be a beneficial form of abdominal exercise, though it was most unlikely that the monks themselves ever thought of it in that light. This would not alter the fact, however. Kneeling and frequently bending forward, combined with the regulated breathing of prolonged chanting, especially with the mind fixed on exalted subjects, together constituted a salutary

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physical exercise which must have helped to keep many of them in good health, or if they were constitutionally frail at least mitigated the ailments to which they were subject.

I became convinced of this some years later when I visited a monastery in the mountains south of Sofia in Bulgaria. I was at that time specially interested in Mantra Yoga, that branch of Yoga which is concerned with sound and vibration with particular reference to the human voice, and one of the monks was giving me some instruction in the method of incantation he practised, for which I was already prepared by my earlier studies in Russia where every priest was trained to produce deep vocal effects in chanting. Later I sat and watched my instructor as he knelt at his devotions. Over and over again he chanted a certain phrase on a single prolonged breath. At the conclusion of each repetition, which coincided with each exhalation, he bent forward and touched the floor with his forehead, prostrating himself before the ikons on the little altar in front of him. Then he raised himself again, taking a deep breath for the next repetition. His spare figure witnessed to the strict monastic régime, but it was obvious that the deep repetitive breathing and abdominal bendings kept him strong, healthy, and alert. I felt tempted to make some remark to him about it, but refrained, because being a simple man brought up in the strict dogma of the Christian church he might have resented my associating his devotions with what might appear to him to be some kind of heathen gymnastics! Nevertheless the fact remained that he was practising a form of Hatha Yoga without knowing it.

I have always suspected, and still believe, that if we could get at the true history of the early Church shorn of theological encrustations, we should find so close an association between devotional and physical practices that the vast artificial structure that has been built up on a foundation of man-made dogma might well totter. This is merely a supposition, but the identification by Jesus of the holy spirit with breath, which in practice means *prana*, and St. Paul's behest to the Romans to present their bodies a living sacrifice acceptable to the Lord, at least lend some support to the theory.* The most sublime

* Romans, XII, 1.

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motto of Hatha Yoga is found in St. Paul's words addressed to the Corinthians: 'Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? . . . Therefore glorify God in your body.'* It is said that Paul was not a strong man, that he was small of stature, and he admits suffering from physical disorders. But who of us does not?

The best of us are cripples by comparison with the unborn archetype of immortal perfection. The sages and *rishis* who formulated the philosophy of the Vedas were not physiologically different from their descendants today, they were only more clear-sighted and straightforward and lived in closer association with nature. They based their teachings on observable phenomena, not on questionable records. They saw that the first thing man desires and requires, even to exist at all, is health, and they devised the best means to attain and preserve it. It is reported that the Lord Buddha also, whose philosophy is based equally on teachings handed down in the Vedas, said the first step on the way to Nirvana—his word for spiritual salvation—is perfect physical health.†

* I Corinthians, VI, 19, 20.
† C. W. Leadbeater, quoted in *The Theosophist*, April 1957.

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5

The Art of Breathing

RESPIRATION is usually regarded as a branch of physiology, but being partly under the control of our will and to that extent subject to our regulation, it is an art. It is as the art of breathing that we shall consider it, since through its conscious manipulation changes can be wrought in ourselves which may radically alter every aspect of our being, including the degree and quality of consciousness itself.

Breathing is our closest contact with life, few can survive more than two or three minutes without air. Food is our second source, but we can survive without it for many days.

The paramount task facing every student of Yoga, regardless of what branch of Yoga he follows, is to learn how to develop and control his respiration. The exercises devised to this end are based on a close observation of natural impulses. Few ever pause to ponder on the extraordinary diversity of our modes of breathing and what they may mean. Besides ordinary breathing when at rest, the act of speech involves an elementary form of breath control which assumes considerable importance in public speaking. Singing, humming, whistling, and especially incantation also involve respiratory control. They have particular significance in Mantra Yoga when it is desired to produce certain kinds of internal vibration within the body. But besides these, the actions of laughter, crying, sobbing, sighing, gasping, yawning, panting, sniffing, coughing and sneezing are all modes of respiratory activity which have their physiological purpose and effect. Long ago the wise men of old who formulated the science of Yoga studied all these modes of breathing,

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and from some of them or combinations of them they built up exercises beneficial to body and mind. They also studied the interesting results of breathing rhythmically through each nostril separately, and the reasons for the phenomenon of alternating predominance of breath through the right and left nostril which can be observed by any person who cares to pay attention to it.

People are often surprised to be told that they ought to learn how to breathe. Respiration being an unavoidable function it is considered unnecessary to do anything more about it, it 'takes care of itself'. But sounder reasoning leads to the opposite conclusion; because it is so essential to life it should be the more carefully studied and its performance maintained at the highest mark. It is by effort that we progress; whenever anything is left to take the line of least resistance it tends to degenerate. The very great majority of people breathe only just sufficiently to keep body and soul together, enough not to die within the next few moments! This is no exaggeration, it is literally so. Poised thus constantly on the very edge of the grave without being conscious of it, they allow their lungs to expand only to cope with the immediate emergency caused every few instants by the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the blood. This process of just staving off death can be prolonged for quite a number of years, but meanwhile many disorders are liable to develop which might easily be prevented by using the lungs habitually to full capacity. There is no final defence against the tomb, of course, but that is not the point. 'While there's life there's hope' is an old saying, but there ought to be much more than hope, there should be health and happiness right up to the natural end. Instead of which, the most essential of vital functions, respiration, is habitually neglected and left to itself; of many people it can be said that the only time they ever take a deep breath is when they yawn, and even that they do in a miserable half-hearted manner as if they were ashamed of it. The inevitable degeneration is aggravated still further by the fact that almost everybody who breathes far too little has no compunction about eating far too much. This sorry picture is characteristic of most business men and women today, especially those who are condemned to work in offices, and it is absurd to

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imagine that it can all be put right by a sundowner in the evening, a dose of salts in the morning, and a game of golf on Saturday afternoon!

In the last few decades physical culturists the world over have begun to pay more attention to the function of breathing in their various systems, and one or two perspicacious people have even issued courses of instruction in breathing only. They are all mere imitations of the respiratory exercises of Yoga, but it is encouraging that at least some attention is paid to the subject. The only satisfactory way of studying it however is to go to the source.

Yoga breathing involves the following five principles.

1. *The habitual use of full lung power*

In the ordinary breathing of average individuals only about one-quarter or less of the lung capacity is brought into play, and a larger proportion only when they exert themselves. It is appalling that this should be considered normal and it is no wonder that tuberculosis is an ever-present menace to the community. Slow, deep, and even breathing as a regular habit is the first reform that has to be effected. The result is a reduction in the number of breaths per minute, for the number diminishes as depth and fullness increase. From fifteen or twenty shallow breaths a minute, which is the common habit, respiration must be reduced to about six when at rest, each inhalation being full and deep and each exhalation complete. The acquisition of this natural mode of breathing as a habit has a revolutionary effect on the nerves of many people suffering from nervous disorders, for such disorders are always associated with disturbed and shallow breathing. The slower and deeper the breathing, the calmer the nerves and the steadier the mind.

2. *Retention of the breath*

To be able to hold the breath is an important feature of Yoga practice. Some of the advantages of this have already been indicated. In advanced Hatha Yoga the period of holding the breath may be very extended;* for ordinary purposes one or

* It is partly by this means that feats of suspended animation are performed.

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two minutes suffice, though it is not difficult to extend this ability considerably further. The practice is based on a close observation of natural requirements. Gasping as a protection against fright, and yawning, as nature's device to restore depleted vitality, are the commonest examples of natural prompting to hold the breath. Intense mental concentration also involves stopping of the respiratory function. This is noticeable even in attentive listening. The physical benefits of retaining the breath in a well-filled lung arise from the increased oxygenation of the blood. Every person in good health should without any preparation be able to hold the breath for a minute without the slightest strain.

3. *Cleansing of the lungs and bronchial passages*

However deeply we inhale and however thoroughly we exhale a quantity of stale residual air always remains in the lungs. There is only one way to clear this out and ensure a complete renovation of air, namely by forced breaths performed with deliberate intent more rapidly than usual. The exercise is known as 'bellows breathing'. By this means a completely fresh supply of air reaches the whole lung with highly stimulating effects through intensified oxygenation of the blood.

4. *Slow-motion stretching breaths*

These are among the most important respiratory exercises for beginners and continue to be a useful standby at all stages of Yoga as they are an excellent means of preparing the body to perform the more advanced postures.

The impulses of sighing, yawning and stretching are often forced upon us in everyday life by fatigue, boredom, or as a corrective to defective respiration at any time, for instance in a stuffy atmosphere. A yawn is essentially an internal stretch of the lungs; it consists of a deeper and quicker intake of breath than usual, which is held for a certain period and is accompanied by an almost irresistible impulse to open the mouth widely and stretch the facial muscles. The physical reason for this action is that the first sign of mental fatigue tends to show itself in the muscles of the eyes which become strained. The

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strain spreads to the rest of the face, leading to puckered brows, tightened lips, clenched teeth, and a generally taut expression. If it is not relieved by yawning the strain is soon reflected in other parts of the body, resulting in headache, impaired heart action and digestion and an endless array of secondary ill effects. One of these is bound eventually to be an impaired complexion, since circulation in the arteries and veins of the face is impeded. Yawning is therefore excellent for the complexion, and the greater the abandon with which the impulse is obeyed, the greater the benefit. The strain in eyes, brows, cheeks, lips, and throat is relaxed, and the mental tension is at once relieved.

Social custom condemns yawning in company because of its association with untimely boredom and fatigue. Consequently we try to suppress it. But such suppression is contrary to nature and if persisted in cannot fail to have a deleterious effect on the nerves, aggravating the very condition the yawn was designed to alleviate. Rather should this healthy impulse be encouraged whenever circumstances permit and the good work should be enhanced by stretching the limbs at the same time. This has the effect of squeezing out sluggish blood from the tissues which will be replenished with the super-oxygenated blood resulting from the internal stretching of the lung. How natural and necessary this impulse is, is proven by its well-known infectiousness. Who has not noticed that if one person yawns, say in a train or bus, several others around follow suit? Every one of them has been unconsciously suppressing the impulse.

5. '*Sun and moon breathing*', *also known as alternate breathing*

It was stated earlier that the *prana* drawn in through the right nostril is regarded as positive (sun breath), that through the left as negative (moon breath). Nervous stability and mental poise can be promoted by the practice of rhythmic breathing through each nostril alternately, at first without holding the breath, later with retention of the breath for specified periods. The different rhythms, length of inhalation and exhalation, periods of retention of the breath, and combinations with abdominal controls, are very numerous and must be adapted to suit each person individually.

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RESPIRATORY EXERCISES

We will now proceed to a description of the exercises prescribed in accordance with the five principles enumerated above.

1. *Complete breathing: the full use of lung capacity*

Breathing is sometimes divided into diaphragmatic, intercostal, and clavicular according to whether the lower, middle, or upper lung is brought into action. Correct breathing always employs all three. The learner attempting deep breathing for the first time should lie flat and place his hands lightly over the diaphragm, just above the navel. He should then exhale completely. As he begins to inhale he must note that the part covered by the hands is the first to expand, moving downward and outward. This assures full use of the diaphragm and is an essential feature of complete breathing, which in addition to increasing the intake of oxygen should also effect a gentle massage of the internal organs of the abdominal region with every breath. As more air is drawn in, the filling of the middle and upper parts of the lungs follows automatically. At the same time the lower abdomen is retracted again and a person observing from the side should see it slightly subside. Finally it should be felt that the shoulders rise with the full expansion of the upper chest. Inhalation, thus practised, should resemble a wave-like movement starting from the abdomen and ending with the shoulders. In exhalation, the reverse movements take place. The whole process soon becomes spontaneous and is performed in one complete movement.

If deep breathing has never been tried before, even this simple and natural action should be done cautiously at first because the unaccustomed intake of a larger amount of oxygen than usual may cause dizziness in those whose breathing has been exceptionally bad. This is the reason for recommending that the first attempts should be made lying down. If dizziness is experienced it should be regarded merely as proof of how greatly respiratory reform is needed. The dizziness will soon cease and the student can then proceed freely, but he should continue to practise prone until he grows quite accustomed to the new mode of breathing.

Both inhalation and exhalation must be through the nose.

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The student must be conscious of the complete filling of the lung from the abdomen to the upper chest, and the release of the breath in exhalation should resemble a slow deep sigh of relief and relaxation. The next breath should not necessarily follow immediately but only when the natural impulse arises; when once it has begun, however, the act of filling the lung should be performed attentively to ensure thoroughness. It is also important to make sure the teeth are parted; unconscious tightening of the jaws is one of the commonest features of nervous strain. If a tendency to drop off to sleep manifests itself it should not be resisted; it only shows how much the body needs to be relieved of its lurking tensions and the resultant sleep will have great curative value.

The next step is to practise the same slow deep breathing seated on a stool, holding the spine straight and the head erect. As before, the inhalations must begin with an expanding diaphragm and the lungs must be consciously filled until it is felt that the expansion has reached the top of the upper chest. As for the movements of the abdomen that should accompany deep breathing, the student should note that there are two transverse sections of the abdominal muscles, upper and lower. Generally speaking, the lower section should always be held drawn in. It is the upper section that is mobile in abdominal breathing. The conscious separate control of these sections of muscle will be dealt with later.

For practice purposes half a dozen repetitions of this exercise are sufficient, but it should be repeated three or four times during the day until it becomes a habit. Finally the student should perform the same mode of breathing standing. It will soon cease to be necessary to devote special thought to the expanding of the diaphragm when the lungs are filled habitually in one complete movement.

The best time for all respiratory exercises is before breakfast in the morning and about sundown, but in any case they should not be done earlier than one to two hours after a meal.

2. *Retention of the breath*

When half a dozen deep breaths can be taken in this way with ease the breath should be held for an instant when the lungs are

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full. One second is enough to start with, then the period may be gradually lengthened *ad lib* according to capacity and comfort. There must be no forcing.

The benefits of holding the breath are increased by concentrating on the increased flow of the life force to every part of the body and the purificatory process taking place as the result of the enhanced oxygenation of the blood.

At the end of each exhalation there is a natural pause with empty lungs until the inhalatory impulse reappears. To extend this pause deliberately for a moment or two strengthens the impulse to make the ensuing inhalation full and deep.

3. *Cleansing the lungs and bronchial passages*

This is achieved through the cleansing or 'bellows breath' (*bhastrika*). The action resembles that of bellows. The simplest positions for this exercise are (*a*) seated cross-legged; (*b*) sitting on the heels; (*c*) seated on a chair in the Egyptian posture, so-called from the posture of many Egyptian statues (legs and thighs, thighs and torso forming right angles, with the spine erect). The positions are shown in Figs. 1, 6, 8, but the hands will rest on the thighs, with the eyes looking straight ahead.

The lung is first emptied, the body being bent forward to aid this action. A deep breath is now taken through the nose, the body straightening up, and as soon as the lungs are full the air is expelled through the mouth with some force, the body again bending forward to assist the expulsion. Without pause the next intake of breath follows at once, through the nose, the body being straightened again, expulsion through the mouth again follows immediately, the body bending forward, and so on for several repetitions. In exhaling there must be no rasping noise in the throat, which should be opened as widely as possible by making the sound 'ho' as if loudly whispered, not spoken. At first this forced breathing should be done gently, the speed should be about two seconds each breath, and the number of repetitions limited to four. If dizziness is felt the exercise should be stopped for a few minutes. Dizziness need cause no alarm, it will quickly pass and merely shows how undernourished with oxygen the blood has been. If there is no dizziness the speed can be increased to one breath every second.

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When four repetitions can be performed comfortably the breath should be held after the fourth intake for a few moments with the lungs full. Careful observation should be made of the effect. If there is any discomfort the air should be let out and a pause made.

Gradually the number of breaths can be extended from four to ten or twelve, and the period of holding the breath prolonged according to capacity and comfort. Though the exercise is performed faster than ordinary breathing the forcing must be only slight; the quicker breathing must grow with practice, in a degree consistent with the student's ability.

The benefits of this exercise are very great. The circulation is stimulated, the pranic flow increased, the nerves are purified through increased oxygenation of the blood, while the repeated bending forward and straightening of the body gives a gentle massage to the viscera, promoting peristaltic action and so facilitating digestion and evacuation.

As the ability to hold the breath increases the moments of retention may be utilized as an exercise for stilling the mind and bringing it into a state of calmness and tranquillity. The eyes should be closed and attention focused mentally on the point of the symbolic 'third eye', midway between the eyebrows.* It will be found that by this quiet concentration the period of holding the breath will be extended. Thought should dwell on the pleasant and peaceful sensation of the exercise and on the benefits to accrue from it. Later, when thoroughly familiar with this practice, the period of retention can be used to repeat mentally any idea that one wishes to instill into one's consciousness, such as a resolve to acquire improved health and well-being, or to eradicate some defect of character or bad habit, or to cultivate some quality that one lacks, such as

* The 'third eye' is a term with a reputation that has suffered through misuse. It is a favourite topic with some popular writers on occultism who appear to have scant knowledge of what they are talking about, while a few years ago a sensational book with this title, purporting to emanate from Tibet, was reported subsequently to have a very dubious origin. Nevertheless it is a convenient symbol of ancient and honoured usage in serious esoteric circles denoting the *ajna chakra*, the sixth of the seven principal *chakras* of the body (see illustration facing page 80). It is the point at which attention should be focused and steadily held in order to awaken what is called 'inner vision'. There is of course no means of verifying the reality of this subjective experience except by persistent practice of it.

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patience or courage. In a word, the moments of breath retention are favourable for constructive self-suggestion. The desired suggestion should be clearly formulated in words beforehand, tersely and concisely, so that no time may be lost in thinking them out when holding the breath. The formula is then repeated mentally with full concentration upon it. Concentration of mind does not necessarily imply great mental effort; it should rather be an almost effortless proceeding, the mind resting steadily on the idea suggested by the words so that it is, as it were, etched deeply into the consciousness.

The cleansing breath can also be performed entirely through the nose, exhalation as well as inhalation. It is generally found that this cannot be done quite so rapidly as oral exhalation, but the gentle forced breathing through the nose is beneficial to the mucous membrane of the nasal passages. The exhalation can be aided by drawing in the abdomen with a quick movement which helps to expel the air from the lungs.

Cleansing breath with movements

The cleansing breath can be adapted to many forms of rhythmic exercise to intensify their beneficial effect. The forward lunge will serve as an example. Standing upright, inhale fully through the nostrils. Lunge forward on one foot, at the same time raising the arms in front, and sweep them round horizontally as far as they will reach behind, hollowing the back, lifting the head and looking upward. This should all be done in one continuous brisk movement. Reverse the movements to return to the starting position, exhaling with force on a 'ho' breath as before. Continue on the other foot, repeating as many times as desired. Sideward lunges can be made in the same manner. These are only examples. The inventive student will find mnay ways in which the same principle can be applied to other movements. Though prolonged retention of the breath is not possible in such cases because carbon dioxide is rapidly formed by active movements, nevertheless the stretching of the chest and the rhythmic action aid in the general process of purifying the lungs and tissues. Both the cleansing breath and also rhythmic breathing without forced exhalations can be adapted with great benefit also to walking. The acts of inhala-

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tion, retention, and exhalation must each be measured to a fixed number of steps. The value of walking as an exercise is immensely enhanced by such breathing.*

The cleansing breath is derived from an observation of panting which is brought on during exertions such as running in order more rapidly to replenish the oxygen supply to the lungs. In advanced Hatha Yoga this mode of breathing has several further refinements but they are unnecessary for ordinary purposes of health and efficiency and can only be done successfully when indicated by a specialist instructor to suit the particular requirements of the student.

4. *Slow-motion stretching breaths*

These are among the most beneficial of respiratory exercises for quickly restoring freshness and vitality to tired tissues and preparing the body for difficult postures by stretching and limbering the muscles.

(*a*) *Simple overhead stretch* (Figs. 4–8). This may be begun standing erect with the arms at the sides; or seated on a stool with torso, thighs, and legs forming right angles (Egyptian posture); or seated cross-legged; or sitting on the heels. In all cases the spine is held straight and in the seated postures the hands rest on the thighs.

Inhale deeply, at the same time slowly raising the arms sideways, well behind the line of the shoulders. The arms must be fully extended with the fingers outstretched. Clasp the hands overhead,and look upward. Turn the clasped hands so that the palms face upward. This increases the feeling of stretching (Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). The stretching need not be forced; it should be gentle at first, and later gradually increased. Hold the breath an instant, then unclasp the hands and bring the arms slowly downward behind the line of the shoulders, fully extended with the fingers outstretched, until they reach the sides. Relax the fingers and arms as they near the end of the descent. In the

* The simplest ways to do this are: (*a*) to take (say) four steps while inhaling and exhale forcefully with a 'ho' breath during two steps, and so on; (*b*) to take (say) four steps while inhaling and four steps exhaling, with two steps of pause, then repeat; (*c*) to take four steps inhaling, hold the breath for four steps, and exhale for four steps, or alternatively exhale with a 'ho' breath. Each must work it out for himself. The variations are endless.

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seated postures the hands return to the knees. While the arms descend the head returns to its natural position at rest. At the conclusion of the movement a few slow deep breaths should be taken standing or sitting still with the eyes closed, the body being relaxed. Make sure the teeth are not touching. During the moments of rest the eyes should remain closed. The period of holding the breath in the vertical upstretched position should be gradually extended according to comfort and capacity.

The remaining stretching breaths are extensions of the above, combined with various twists and bends while the arms are stretched overhead and the breath is held. As before, a deep breath is taken, the arms are raised laterally behind the line of the shoulders, the eyes look upward, and the hands are clasped overhead with upturned palms. This will henceforth be referred to as the vertical position. There are now six ways in which the torso is to be moved with the breath held.

(*b*) *Vertical twist* (Fig. 9). In the vertical position, holding the breath, twist the body vertically leftward. Throughout the movement the line of the body and raised arms must remain straight. The eyes remain fixed on the ceiling. When the furthest point of turning is reached, return and twist the body similarly to the right. Return to the front and exhale as before.

In this exercise the speed of the twisting movement must be such as just to complete it comfortably during the breath retention. The head turns as if forming a unit with the shoulders. The hands must not deviate from the vertical line. At first the degree of twist must be slight, and if there is any discomfort the exercise should be broken off and recommenced after a pause. Gradually the extent of twisting and the pressure at the furthest points can be increased. The exercise develops the chest and shoulders, elongating the lateral muscles and imparting grace to them. Holding the eyes in their upward gaze strengthens them and increases the powers of attention.

(*c*) *Lateral stretch* (Fig. 10). From the vertical position the body is bent sideward to the left. The elbows will bend slightly and form a frame for the head when regarded from the front. The head turns to the left and the eyes look downward. The right elbow must not move out of the line of the lateral movement. From this position the body passes over to the corres-

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The Seven Principal Chakras

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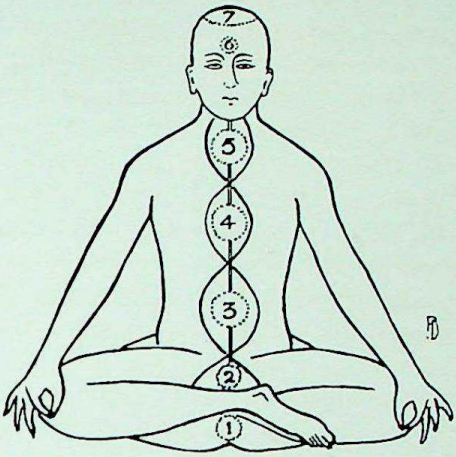
1. *Muladhara*: at the base of the spine

2. *Svadhisthana*: over the generative organs

3. *Manipura*: at the solar plexus



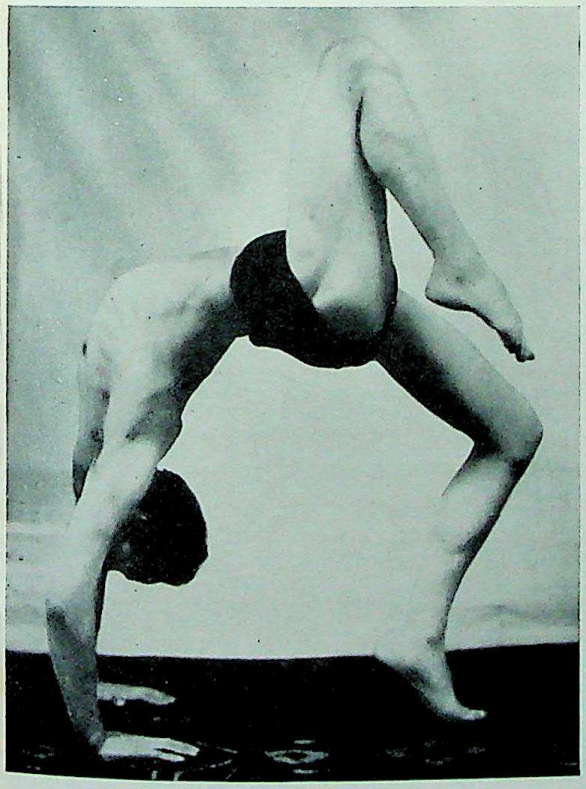
4. *Anahata*: at the cardiac plexus

5. *Vishuddha*: in the throat

6. *Ajna*: between the eyebrows

7. *Sahasrara*: at the crown of the head

The intertwining lines represent the direction of the positive and negative forces of prana (*pingala* and *ida*) controlled through pranayama. The central channel is *sushumna*



The Wheel posture (*chakrasana*)

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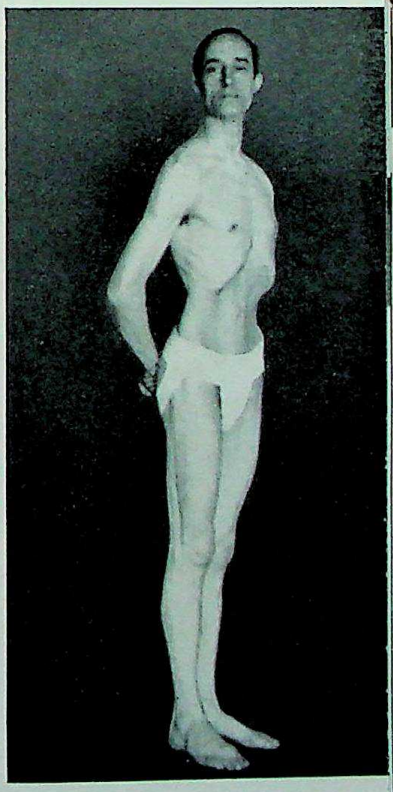

The author after a prolonged fast

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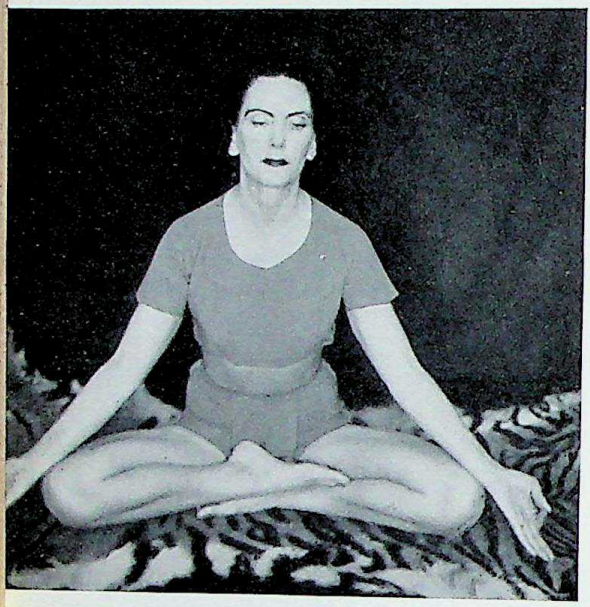

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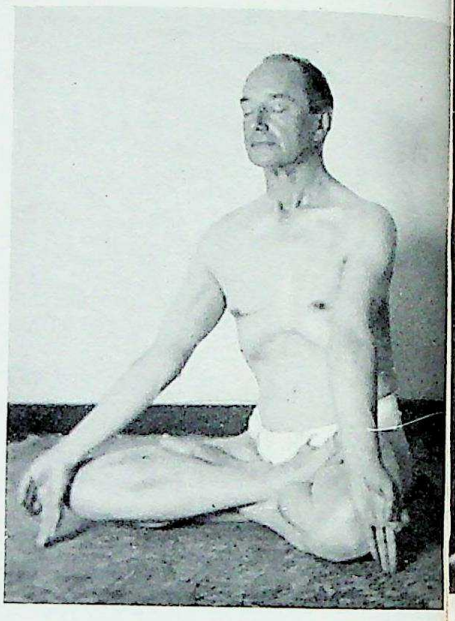

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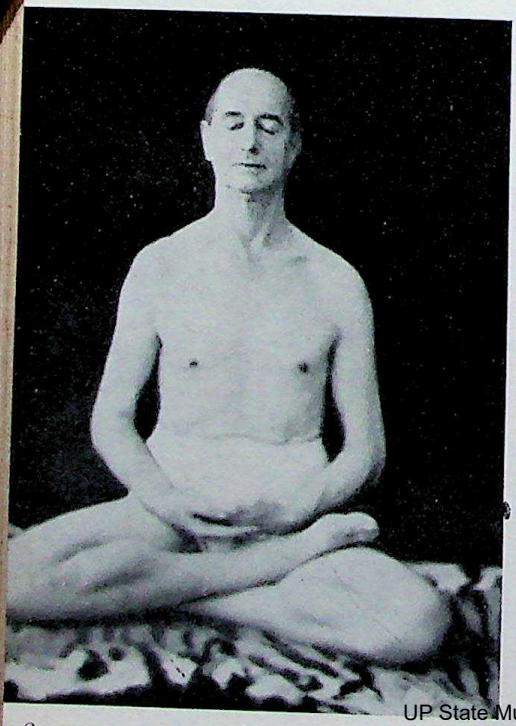

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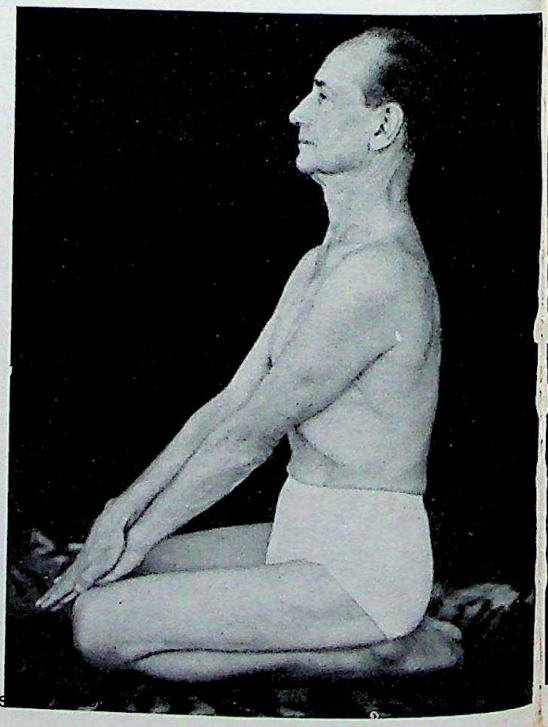

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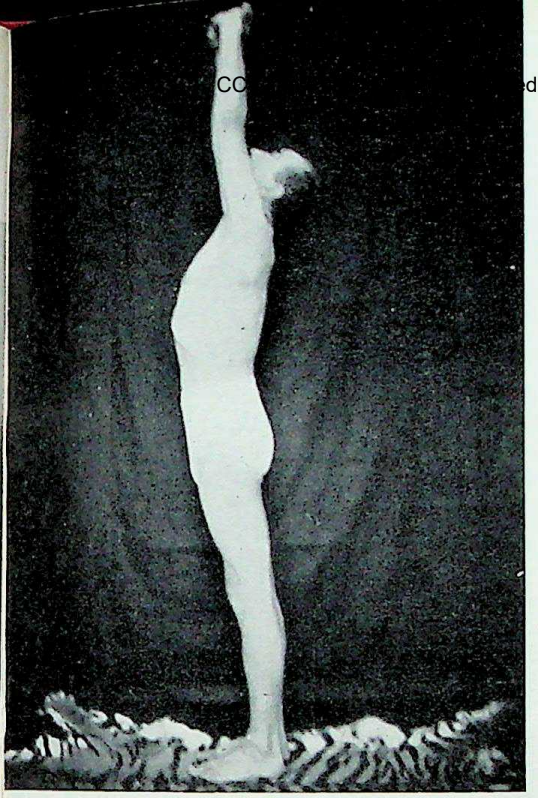

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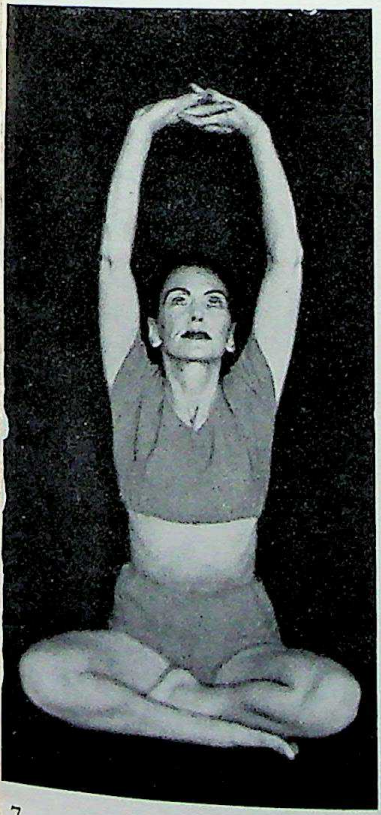

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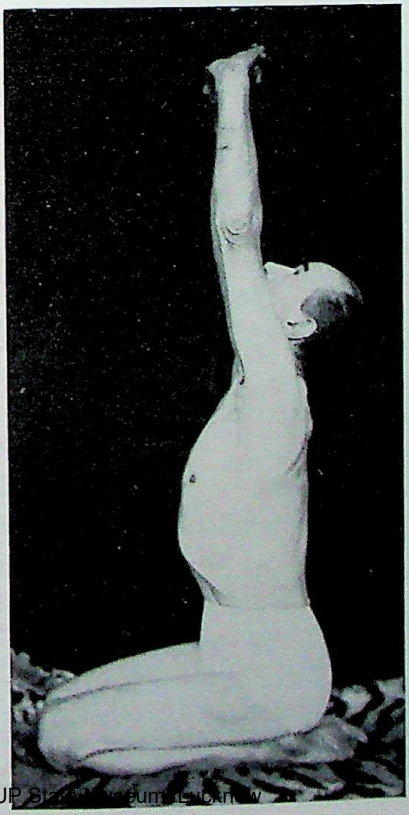

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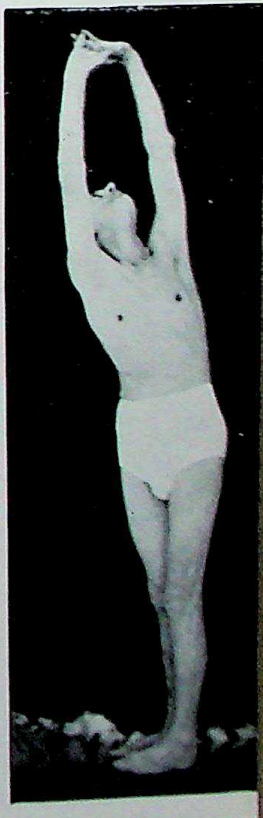

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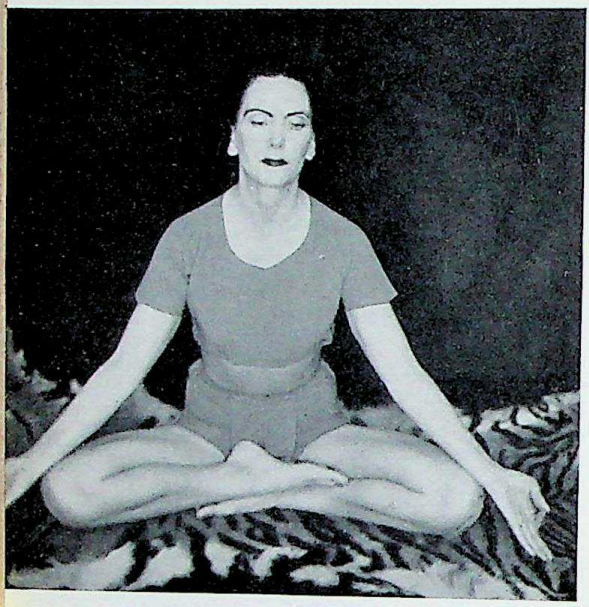

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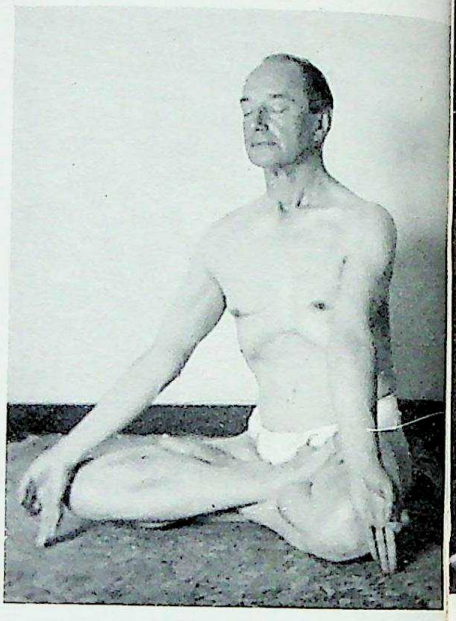

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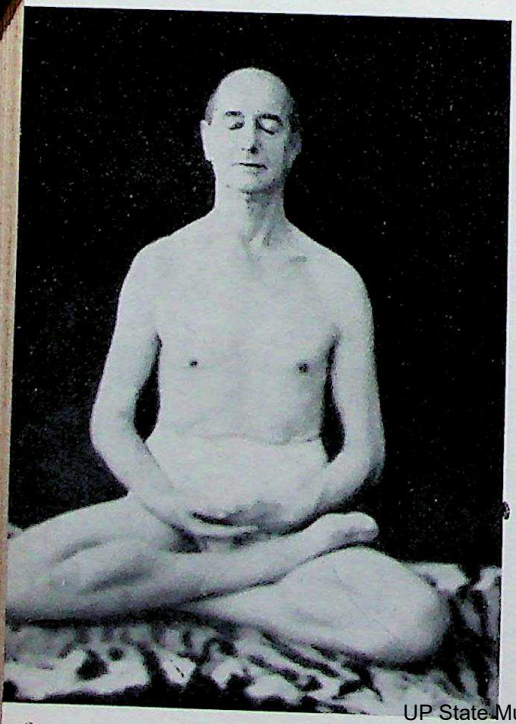

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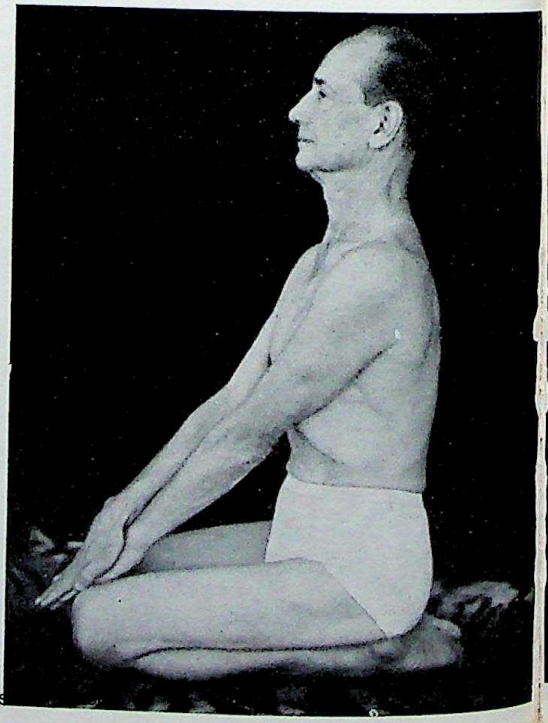

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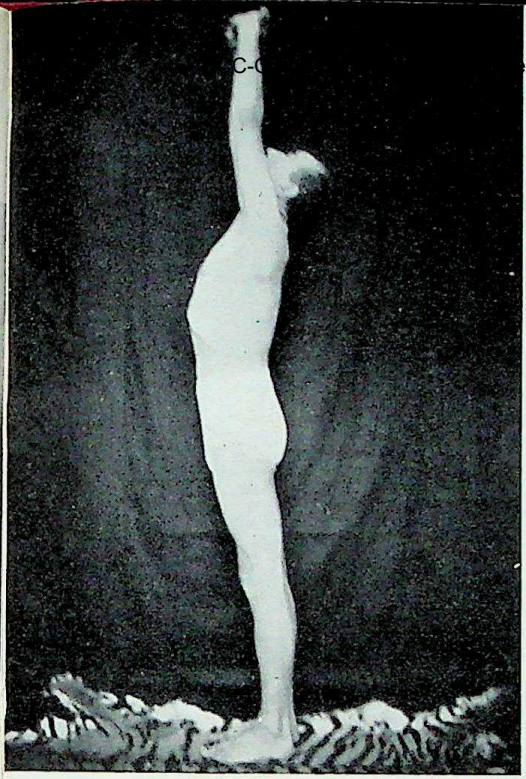

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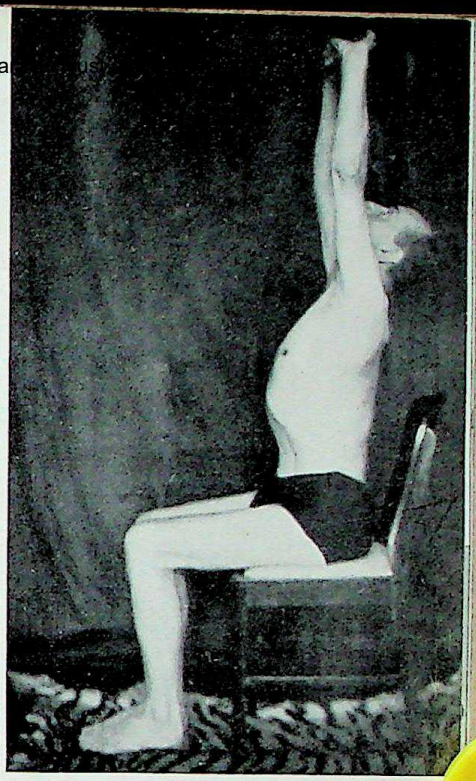

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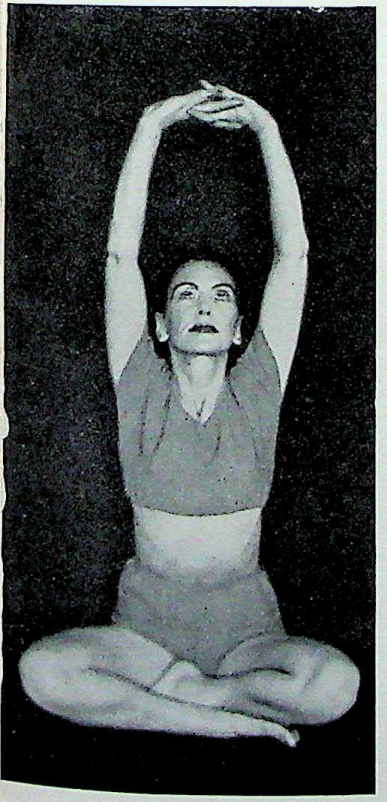

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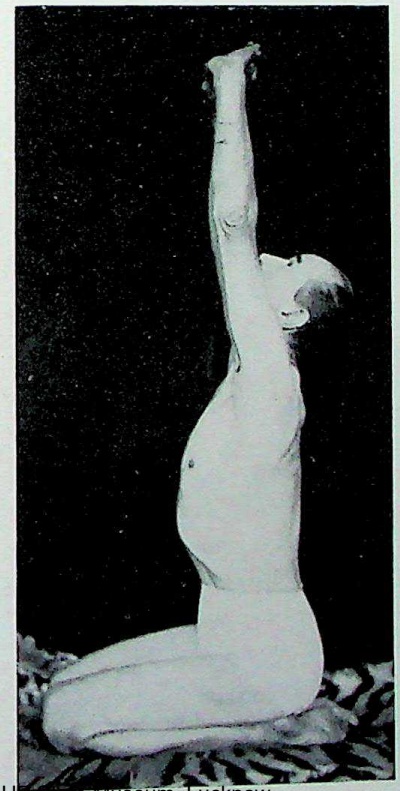

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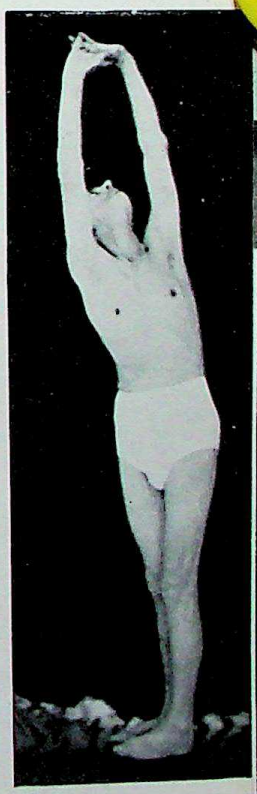

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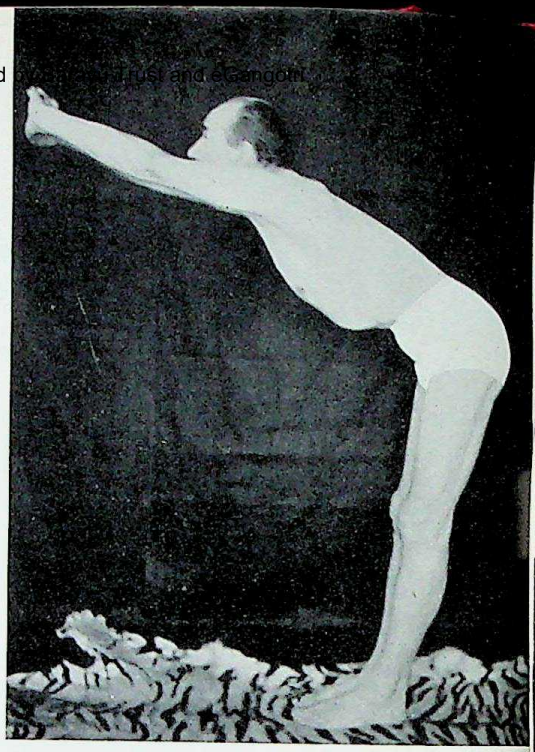

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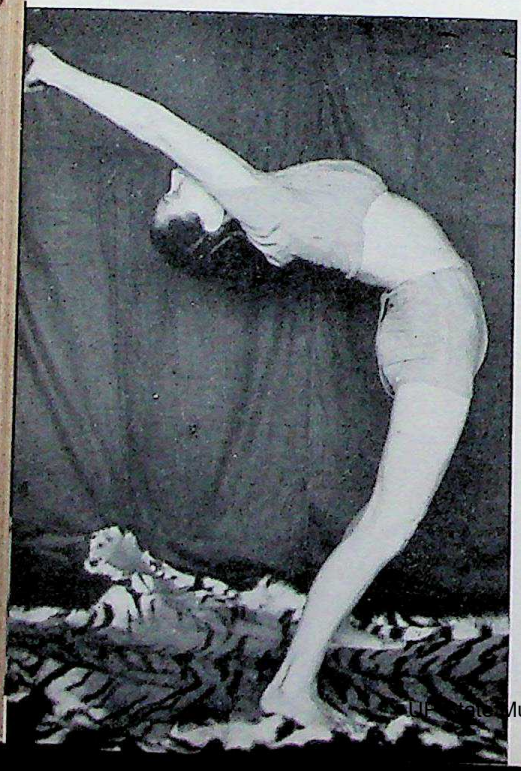

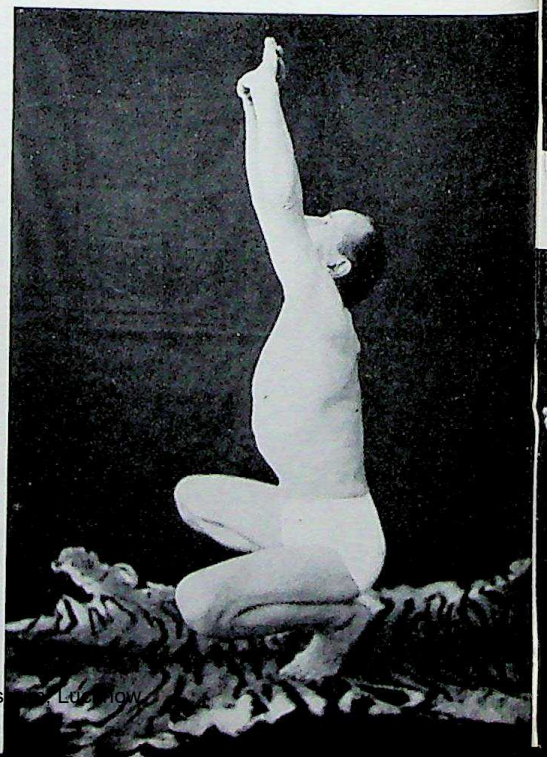

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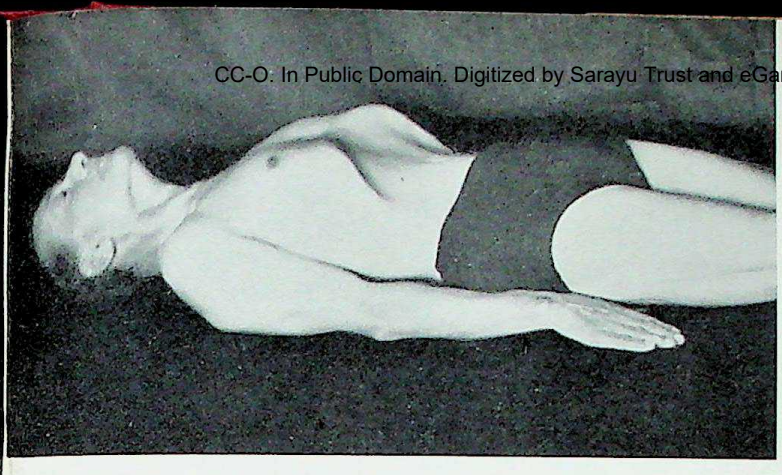

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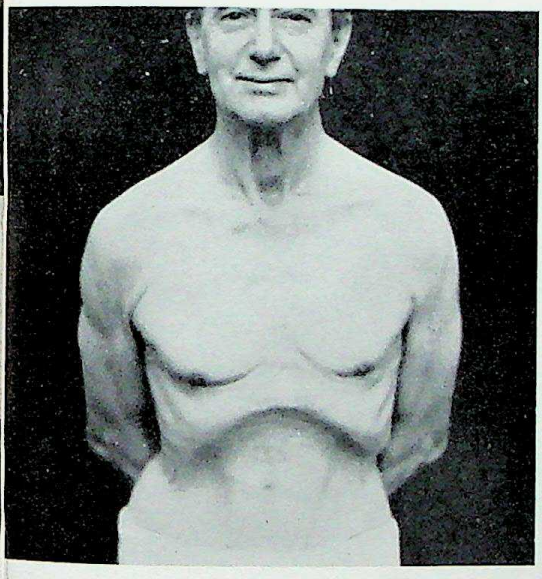

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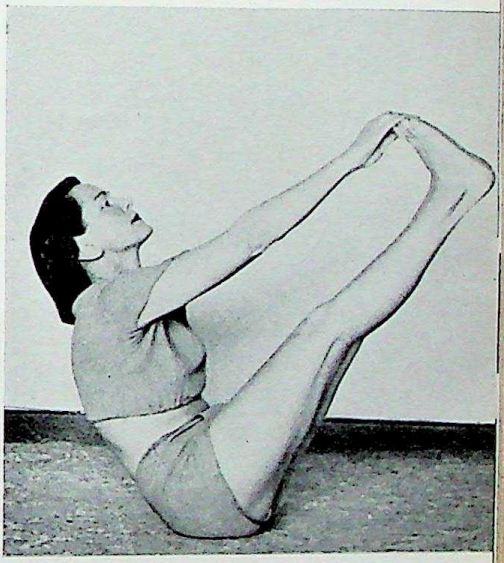

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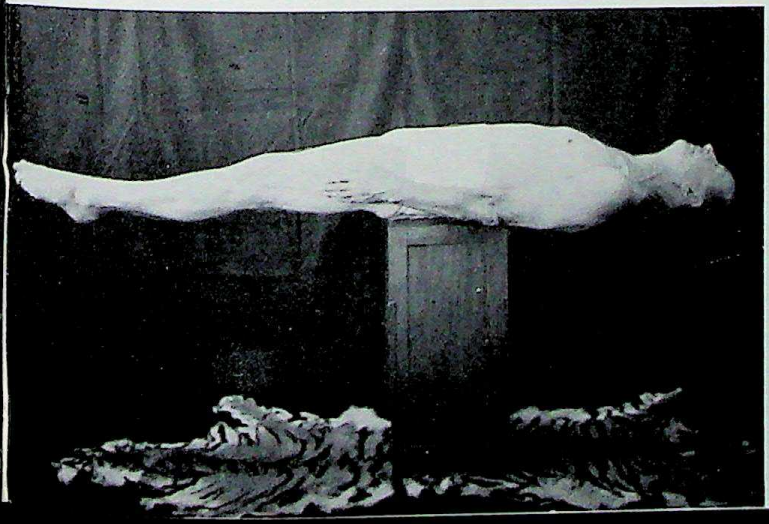

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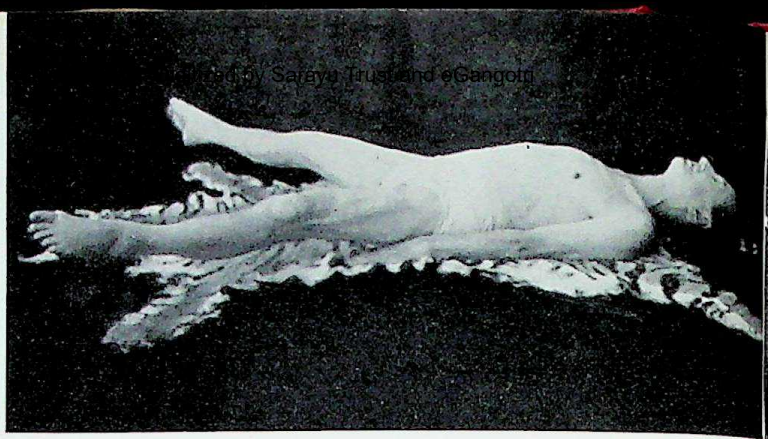

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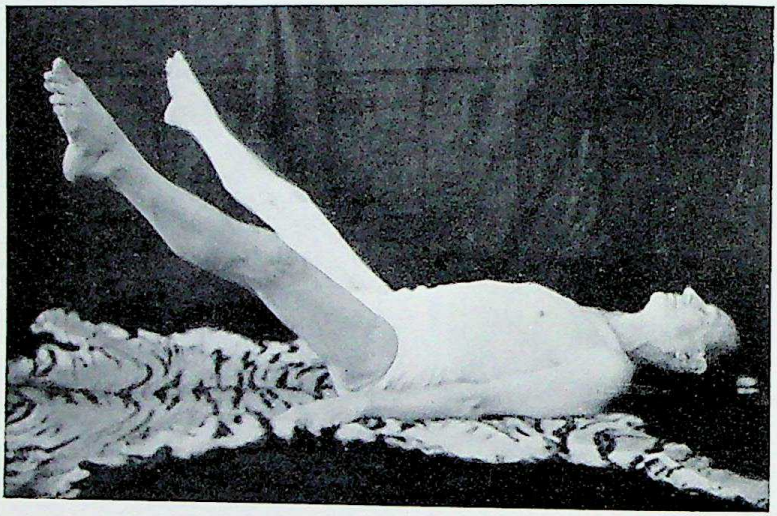

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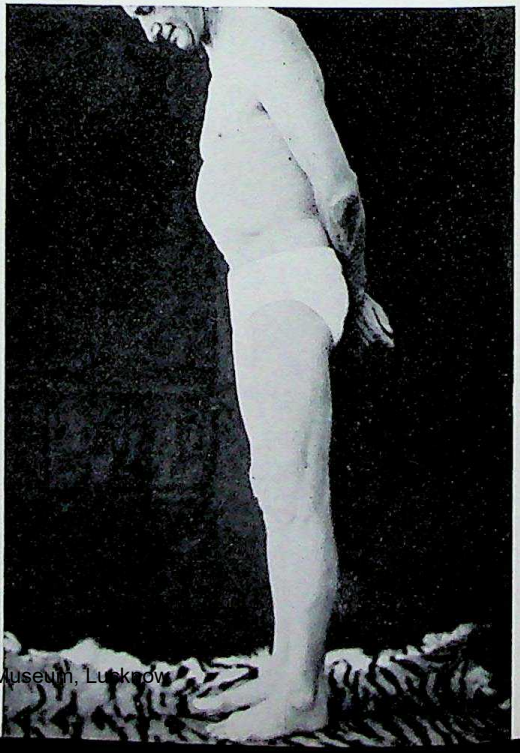

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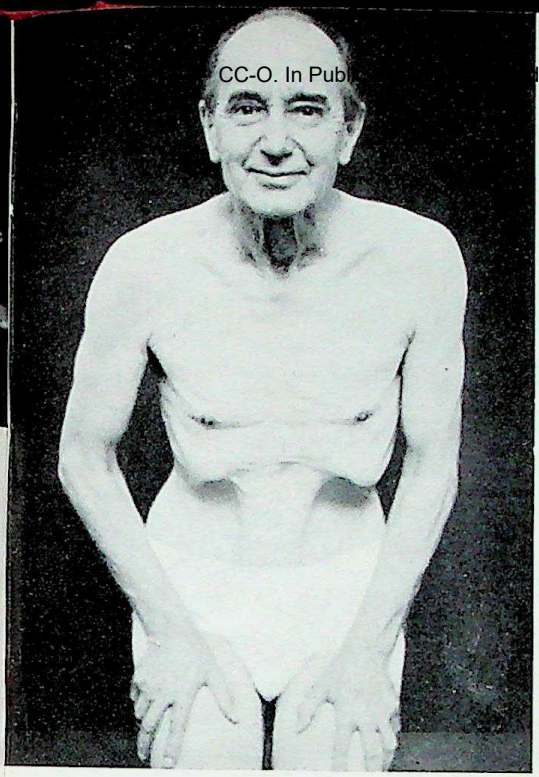

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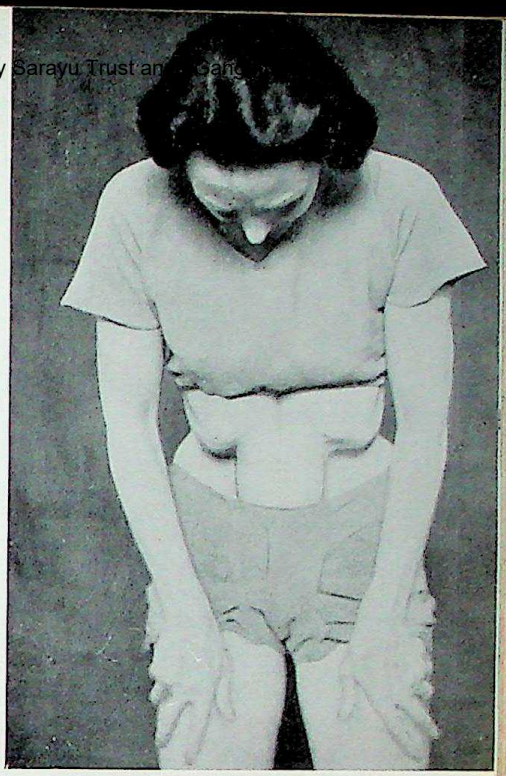

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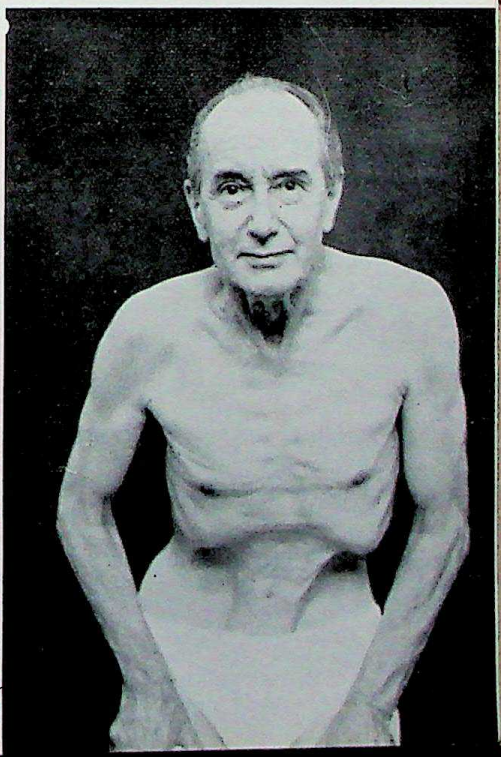

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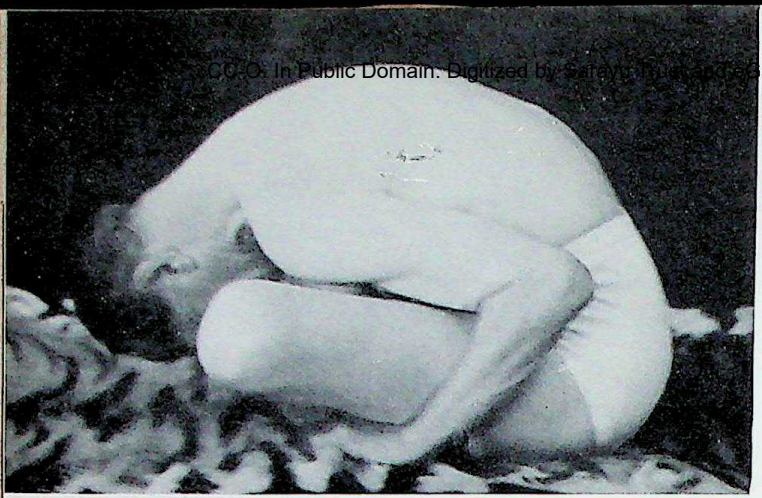

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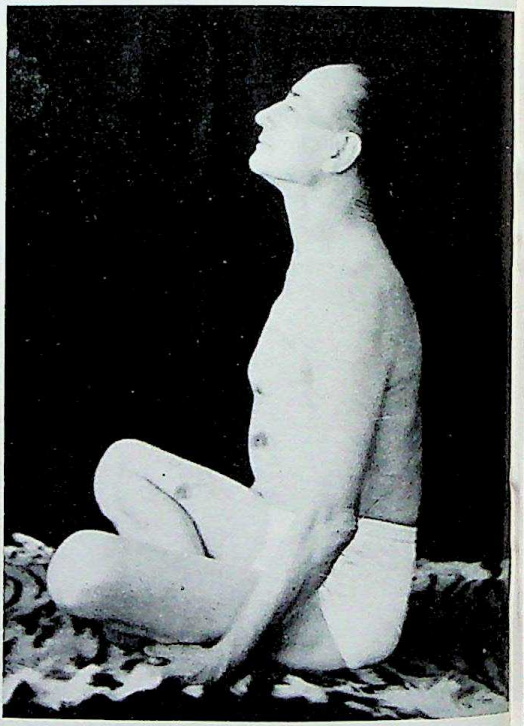

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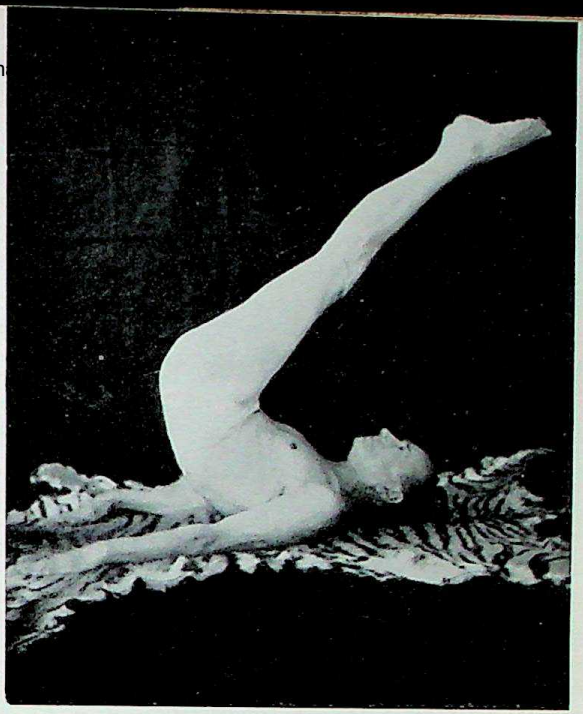

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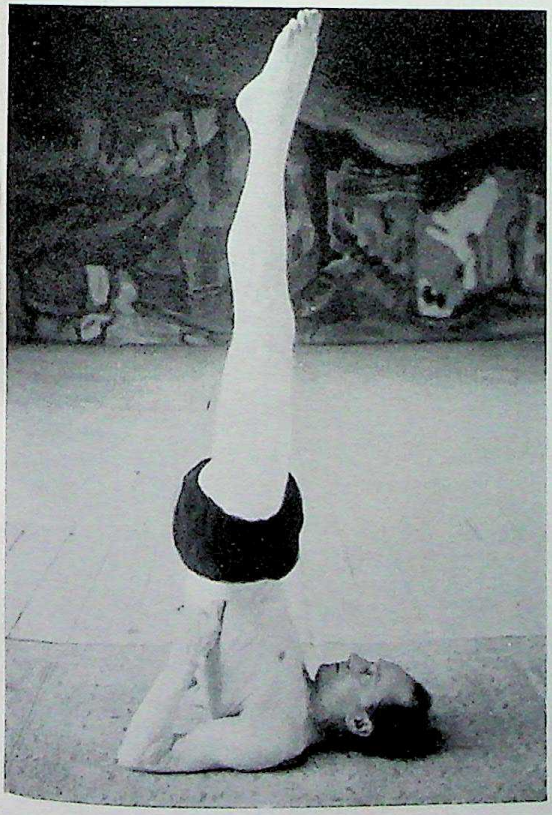

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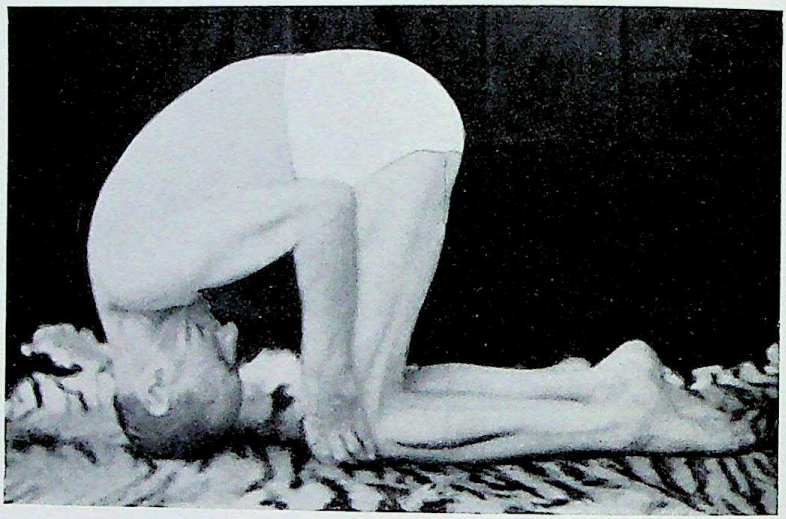

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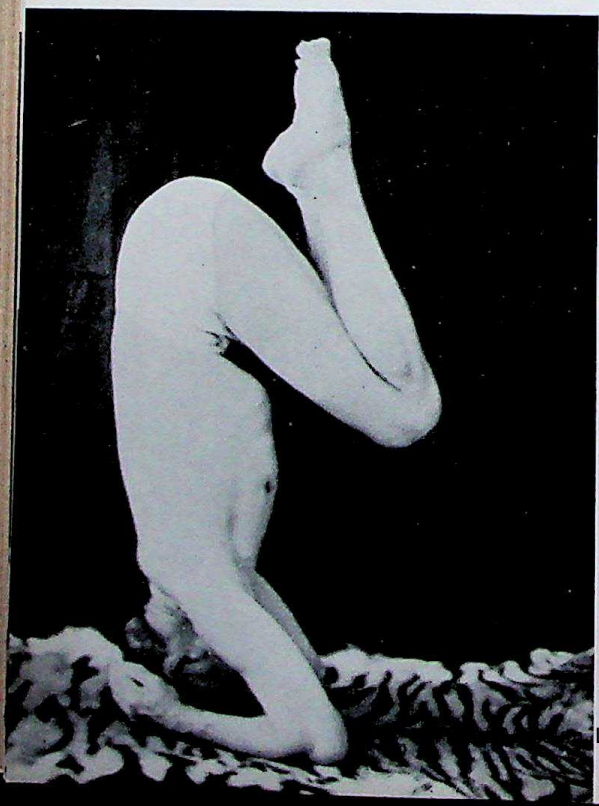

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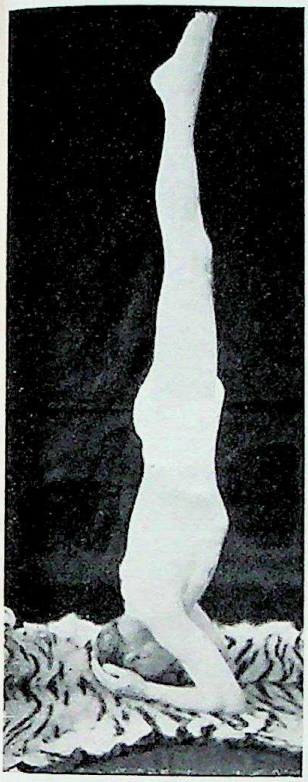

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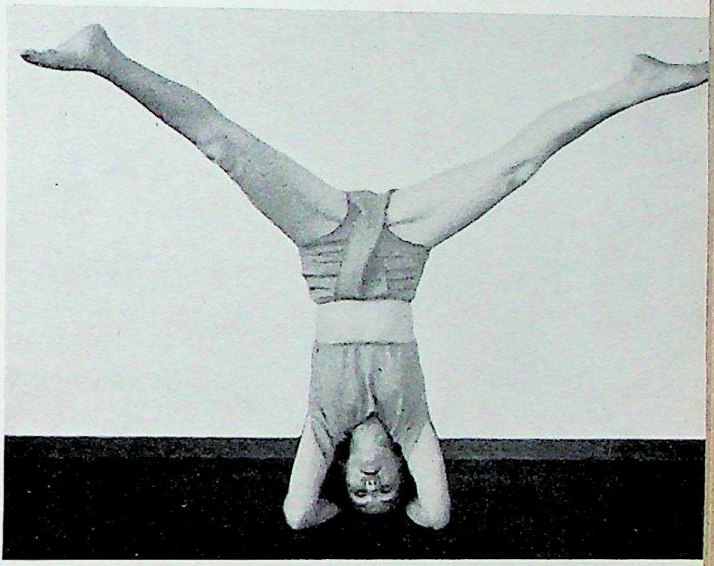

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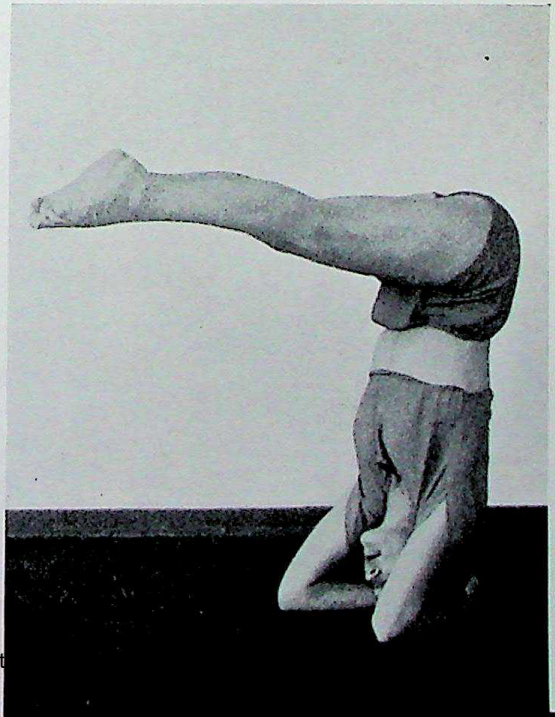

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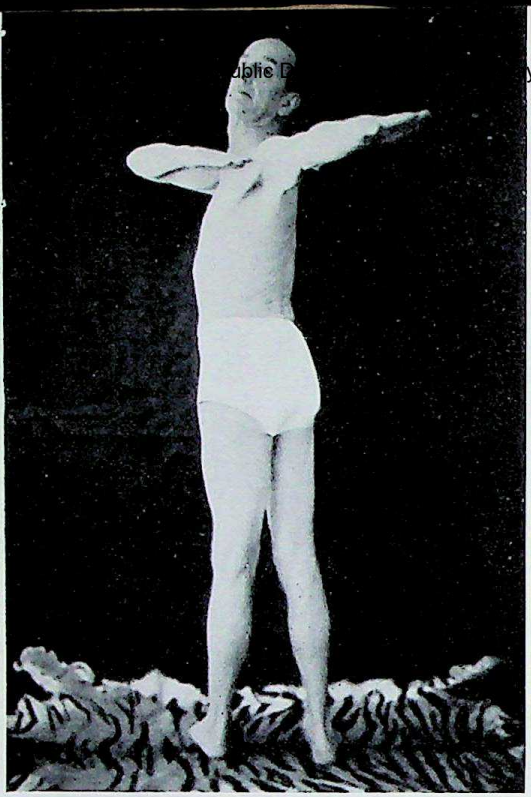

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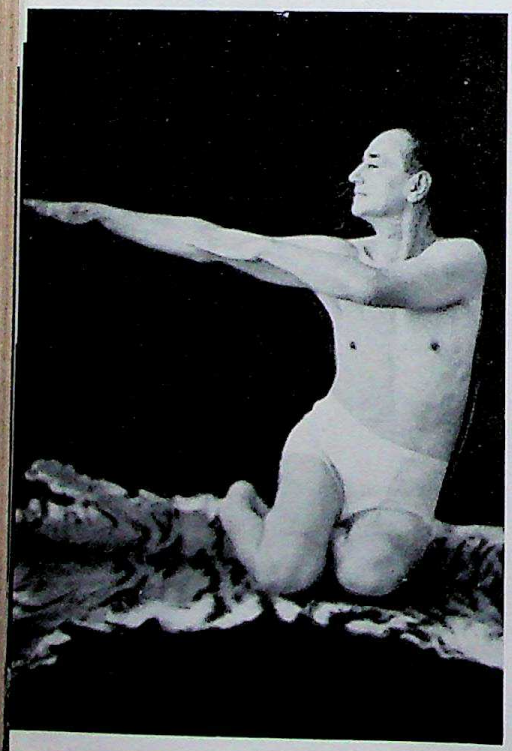

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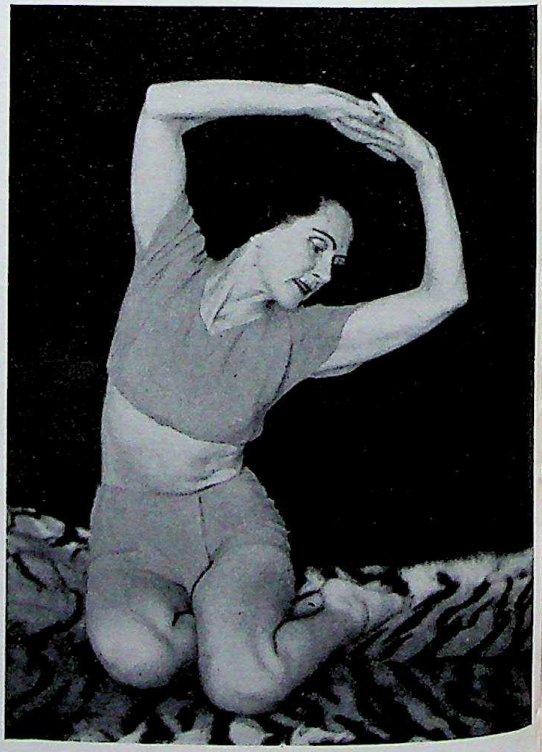

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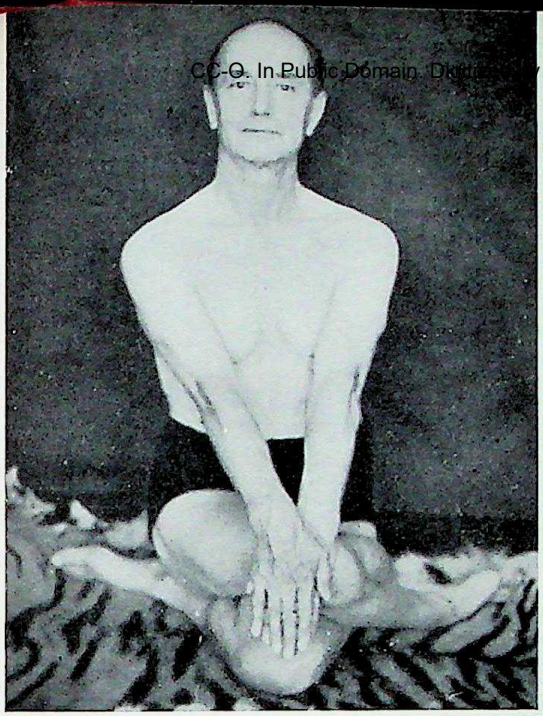

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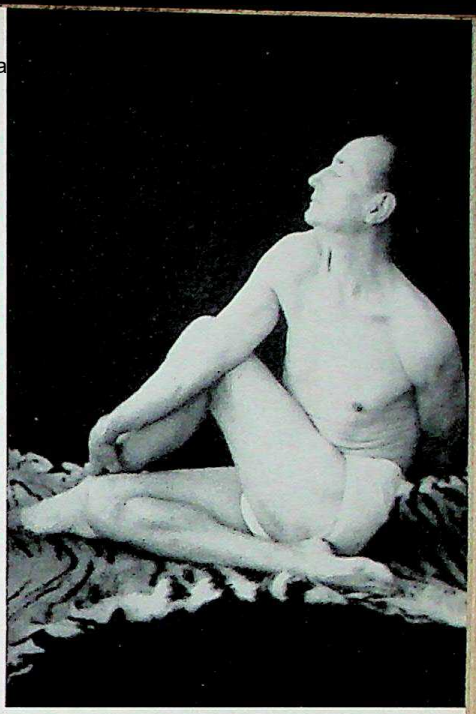

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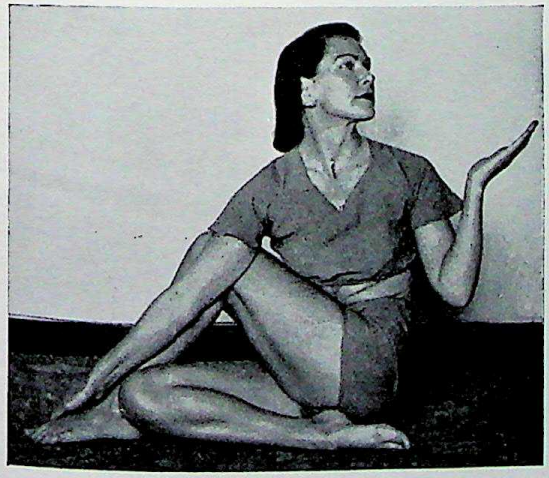

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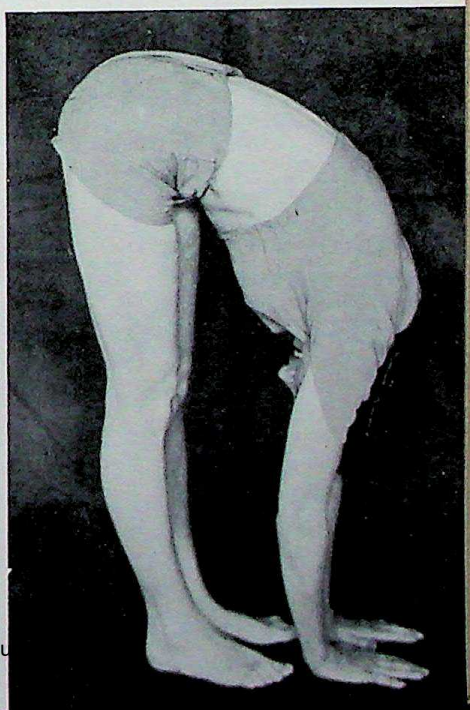

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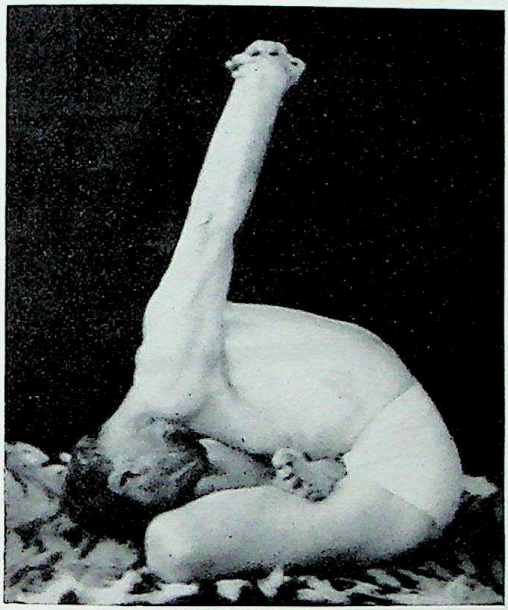

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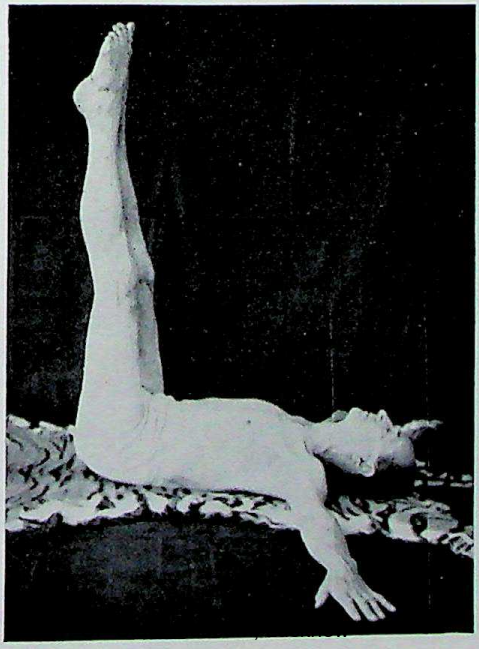

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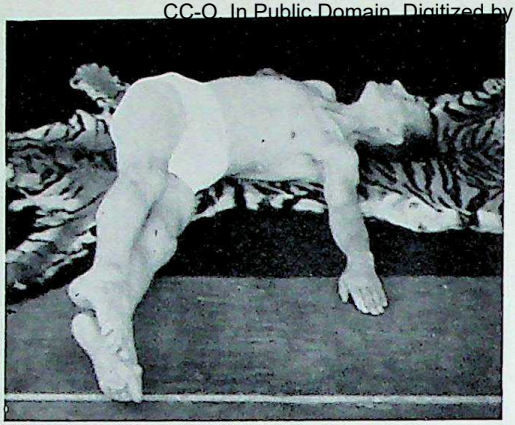

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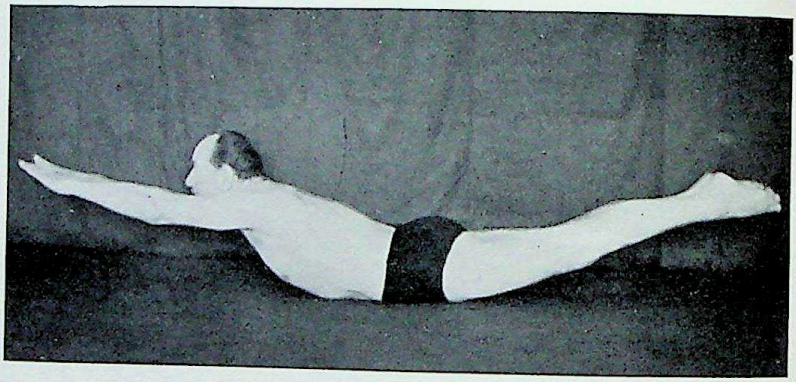

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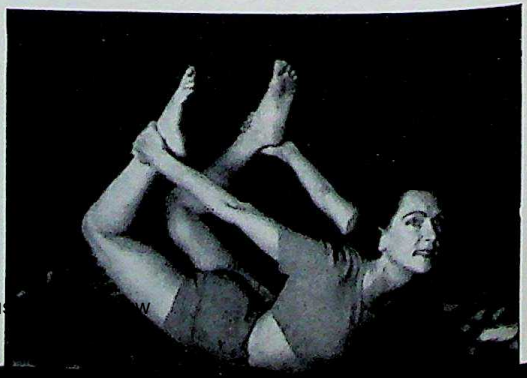

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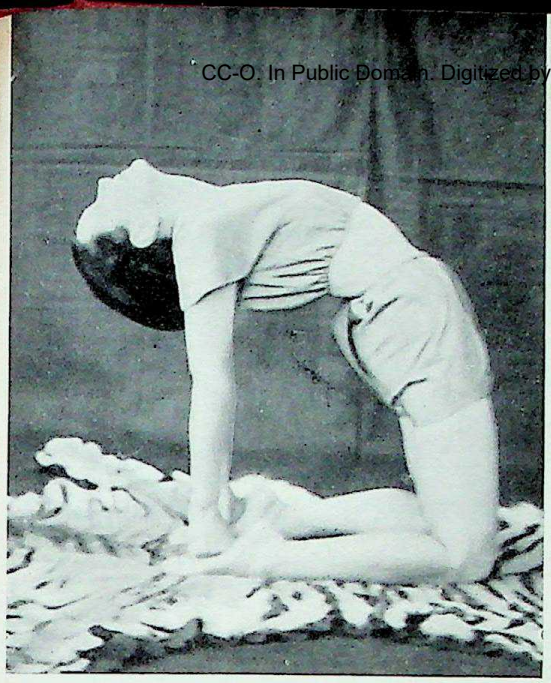

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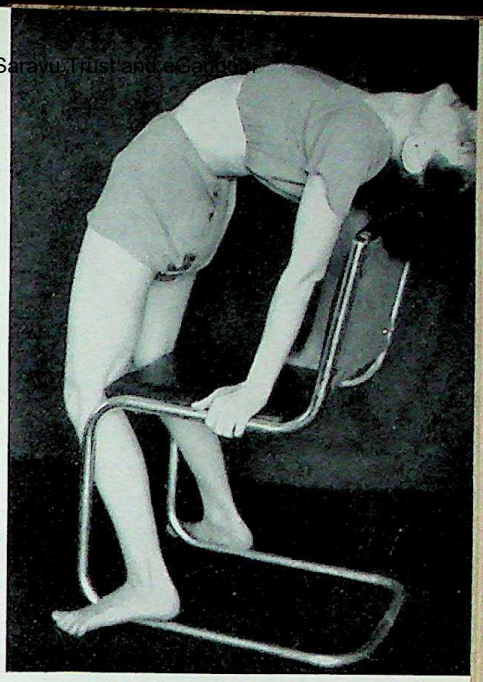

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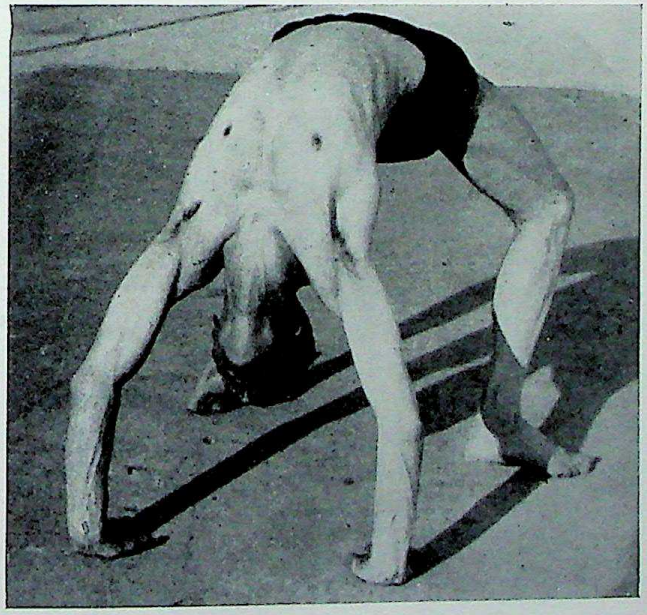

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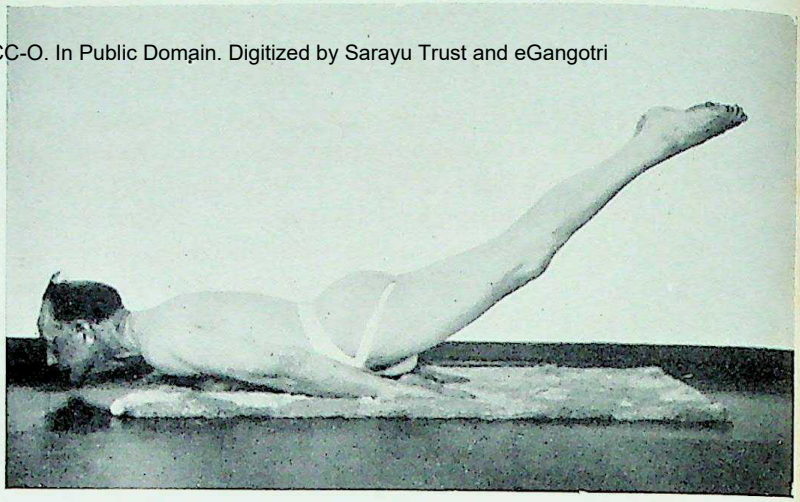

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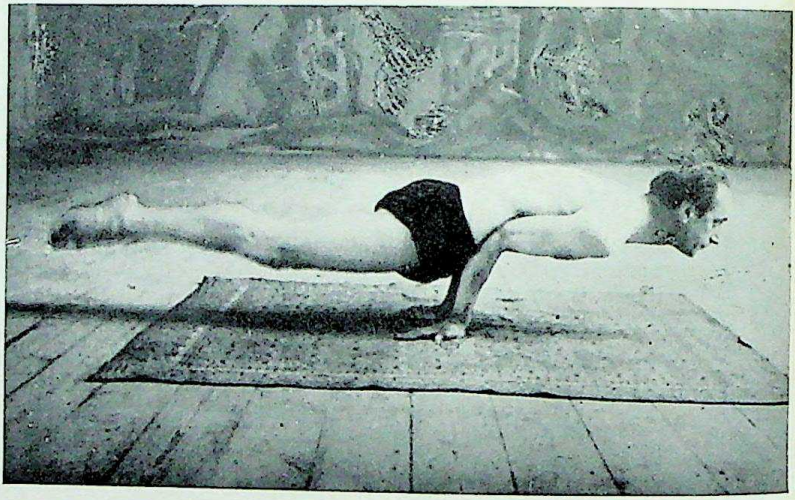

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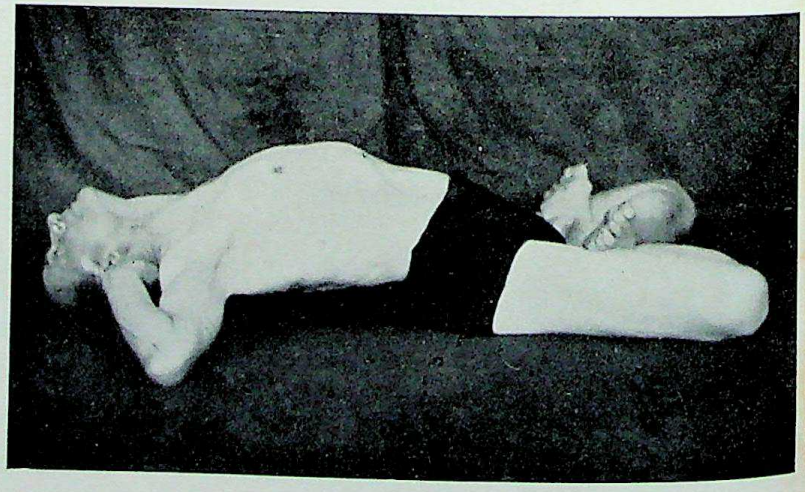

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ponding position on the other side. Recovering from this position to the vertical, lower the arms and exhale as before. At first the degree of stretching must be moderate, increasing little by little. Speed must be such as just to complete the double movement evenly during the breath retention. Or else, each side may be bent on a separate breath to begin with. This exercise develops the muscles of the sides and increases the suppleness and flexibility of the torso.

(*d*) *Posterior lateral stretch.* This is the same as the above, except that in bending sideward the torso is twisted also slightly rearward, the eyes looking down over the shoulder as if trying to see the back.

(*e*) *Forward stretch* (Fig. 11). From the vertical position bend forward from the hips, keeping the back straight. The head must be held well up, the eyes also turned upward. The arms also are pressed upward. Any lowering of the arms diminishes the value of the stretch. After holding the forward position an instant, the torso recovers to the vertical. Exhalation and relaxation take place as before. To derive most benefit from this exercise the bend must be entirely from the hips with knees stiffened, spine straight, head thrust back and arms pressed upward.

(*f*) *Backward stretch* (Fig. 12). From the vertical position bend backward instead of forward. The head is held well back, the eyes look behind overhead, and the arms are pressed backward. This stretch must be performed gently at first as it is liable to disturb the sense of balance.

(*g*) *Knee-bend stretch* (Fig. 13). From the vertical position, holding the arms upstretched and the eyes looking upward, bend the knees, and after a short pause at the lowest point rise again, and exhale as before. This is usually found somewhat difficult at first as it taxes the sense of balance. As a preparation it can be practised as an ordinary knee-bend exercise with the arms held horizontally and the eyes on the level. Eyes and arms can then be raised little by little.

In all the above exercises it is essential that the breath is held throughout the movement. It is this which distinguishes them from mere gymnastic and has the most far-reaching effect in training the nerves.

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All the above stretchings strengthen the sense of balance in addition to other advantages. Controlling the eyes strengthens them as well as developing the powers of attention. After every exhalation, relax while taking the recovery breaths. Relaxation while standing is aided by allowing the weight of the body to be borne by one leg while slightly bending the other knee.

Variations of the above stretches

The above exercises may be done in any order one prefers. With proficiency the effects may be enhanced by holding each extreme point of stretch immobile for a few seconds. The exercises are as a rule performed as slowly as breath-holding ability allows, but by way of exception they may be speeded up, for instance so as to double or treble the number of movements during the breath retention. In these cases, however, there should be no jerkiness, the motions should be smooth and rhythmic even when rapid.

(*h*) *Rotational stretching*. From the vertical position bend forward as in Fig. 11, and slowly rotate the body to the left to the position of Fig. 10. Hold this an instant, then continue so as to arrive at the backward bend of Fig. 12. Again hold this an instant, and continue to the corresponding sideward bend on the right. Hold an instant and complete the circle to the forward bend (Fig. 11), straighten, and exhale. The same must be done in reverse order. The rotation may also be performed as a continuous movement. With proficiency it may also be speeded up so as to take in the double rotation on a single breath, or two double rotations on the same breath. These additions should be made gradually.

The above exercises not only possess their own intrinsic value, but are a useful preliminary to several of the postures (*asanas*) that are to follow. By this preparation the latter will be made easier and the benefits to be derived from them will be expedited and enhanced.

Suppleness of body the key to youthfulness

The stretching breaths have a special function in preserving youthfulness by rendering the body supple and sinuous. There is a close connection between sinuosity and youthfulness, for it

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is by the squeezing out of the sluggish blood from the tissues in the process of stretching and twisting the limbs that quick renewal of the blood supply is maintained and the muscles retain their youthful freshness. The slow performance of the exercises enhances this effect. The muscular strength of big biceps is not conducive to this result; on the contrary, beyond a certain very moderate point, bulging muscles become an obstruction as well as an eyesore, for balloon-like muscles tend to turn to fat in middle age. The kind of muscle that is required for suppleness and sinuosity is not the compact but the elongated type, the type of muscle that imparts grace and elegance to the figure together with firmness and resilience. It is not by weight-lifting or dumb-bell gymnastics that graceful muscles are developed, but by frequent elongated natural stretching combined with controlled rhythmic breathing. Besides being the best preparation for what is yet to come in the system of Hatha Yoga, the stretching breaths and swinging movements that follow constitute a most valuable means of preserving natural youthfulness, especially when combined with the simple exercises for abdominal control that will shortly be described.

5. *The Alternate or 'Sun and Moon' Breath*

In this mode of breathing the right and left nostrils are used separately, thus concentrating the positive and negative currents of *prana* which flow through the right and left nostrils respectively. Its primary object is to equalize and balance these currents in the body.

In its simplest form the alternate breath consists of deep breathing through each nostril in turn. Seated in any convenient posture with the spine erect, the right nostril is closed with the right thumb, and a slow full inhalation is taken through the left nostril. The breath is held an instant, then the left nostril is closed with the third and fourth fingers of the right hand and exhalation takes place slowly through the right nostril. A slight pause follows until the impulse to inhale again comes spontaneously, then the next breath is inhaled through the right nostril, the left continuing to be held closed. Again the breath is held for an instant. The right nostril is now closed with the thumb once again, the left is released, and exhalation takes

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place slowly through the left nostril. This constitutes one round.

At first the exercise should be limited to three rounds, increasing the number gradually to a maximum of six. It is most effective at sunrise or the early hours of the morning, facing east; at midday, facing the meridian; at sunset, facing west; and before going to rest at night, facing north.

This exercise has a powerful effect in harmonizing the nervous currents of the body. It should be preceded by two or three ordinary slow deep breaths through both nostrils to dispose the mind peacefully, and it should be followed similarly. It will be found that inhalation is naturally somewhat quicker than exhalation; the latter should be slightly restrained, and when the student is used to the exercise as above described the length of exhalation should be standardized at twice that of inhalation. Thus if the length of inhalation is five seconds the length of exhalation will be ten. The actual length of inhalation in seconds must depend on the student's capacity and comfort, but once established it must remain unaltered throughout the six rounds.

The next stage is to prolong the retention of the breath until it equals the length of the inhalation. The ratio of inhalation, retention, and exhalation will then be 1 : 1 : 2, followed by a natural pause until the impulse to inhale again reappears. As the breaths are lengthened there will be less tendency to make any pause at all, they will follow on each other immediately.

In doing this exercise it may be found that one nostril seems to be more open than the other, sometimes the right, sometimes the left. This is a natural phenomenon, as was explained earlier. Approximately every two hours, in some people somewhat less, the predominance of the 'sun' or positive aspect of *prana* alternates with the 'moon' or negative aspect, and in a healthy person this alternation from nostril to nostril will be quite regular. Any slightly unequal opening of the nostrils can therefore be disregarded as a natural condition, but in ill health the regular alternation may get upset and the predominance of one nostril may last much longer. If this is observed, the balance can be restored, or in any case too long a predominance of either nostril may be checked, by lying down on the side of the open nostril, on the right side if that nostril is open and the other seems to be obstructed. This generally restores the alter-

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nation fairly quickly, and will certainly do so if persisted in. The exercise itself is designed to establish the proper balance between positive and negative forces, but since the nervous system is a very delicate mechanism this process must not be forced. Hence the important instruction to do only a limited number of rounds at each practice.

The alternate breath has almost unlimited variations, relating mainly to periods of retention of the breath and deviations from the strict alternation of right and left nostrils. For instance, for several rounds confining the respiration to one nostril only; confining the single-nostril operation to inhalation or exhalation and performing the other half of the operation through both nostrils; extending the usual number of rounds; extending the period of retention of breath in or out; and other modifications.

The student is not advised to experiment independently with these variations. The reason for this caution is that this particular exercise affects some people strongly. Trouble is caused when foolish people try to run before they can walk. The order and degree in which things are done is often very important. If learners go too fast and experiment without guidance they may get peculiar sensations which they cannot control and which do not cease when they stop the exercise and which may cause them a lot of trouble.

This is the respiratory practice most closely associated with conscious arousing of the power of *Kundalini*, and is therefore regarded as pranayama *par excellence*. But the manner in which it is performed for psychic purposes is too difficult for most people and in any case too risky without proper supervision. Nevertheless for the purpose of information, and because the reader may find it indicated in some books on this subject, I will include it here, always however with the reiterated warning of the dangers of unguided experimentation.

The relative extension of inhalation, retention of the breath, and exhalation must ultimately be 1 : 4 : 2, conducted over a number of repetitions as prescribed by the instructor to suit the condition of the pupil. This can therefore only be communicated personally. The number of rounds to start with is generally limited to three, to be extended as the effect on the student permits. But with a view to giving the reader at least some idea

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of the degree of control to which this practice can be extended, a moderate degree of pranayama is said to be when 1=20 seconds, an advanced degree when 1=30 seconds, and the sublime degree when 1=40 seconds. This means, as a little arithmetical calculation will show, that in the first instance one complete inhalation-retention-exhalation must last a total of 140 seconds or 2 minutes and 20 seconds; in the second instance 210 seconds or 3 minutes and 30 seconds; and in the third instance 280 seconds or 4 minutes and 40 seconds. And it must be borne in mind that each of these is only half of one round, so that one complete round in the first instance must last 4 minutes and 40 seconds, in the second 7 minutes, and in the third 9 minutes and 20 seconds. Moreover, to have some comprehension of the truly superhuman control required in this practice, the number of rounds imposed, which began with three, may be extended to a much larger number and must be executed without the slightest wavering in the rhythm from start to finish.

And yet it remains true to say that in its simplest form of taking a few slow breaths alternately through the right and left nostril (at a rate of about three breaths a minute) the exercise can be undertaken without any risk, provided the student has passed through the prior preparation of acquiring the habit of complete breathing and is acquainted also with the cleansing breath (*bhastrika*). The essential is that the measure of the breathing through three or four rounds shall remain unchanged, the period of retention must be short, any extension of this even by very few seconds being added only with great caution. Thus performed it will have a beneficial and soothing effect on the nerves and help to restore and maintain balance and poise in the nervous system.

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6

The Asanas: (1) Seated Postures, Shoulder-stand and Headstand

We now come to the third main department of Hatha Yoga, which deals with the training and control of the spine.

The spinal cord is our tree of life. The branches and leaves are the ramifications of the nervous system which spread out right and left from the spinal cord to the most distant parts of the body. The central canal of the cord is the channel along which the vital force of *Prana* travels in awakening latent psychic powers.

The effective functioning of the nervous system is closely linked to the healthy condition of the spinal cord. The latter consists of a string of vertebrae, each separated from those above and below by a disc or pad of cartilage. For free nervous functioning it is essential that the vertebrae should not be pressed too close together, for such pressure may impinge on the nerves causing derangement of function.

As life advances there is a tendency for the vertebrae to settle in rigid contact, especially if habits are sedentary and no counter-measures are taken. Also if the body is held habitually in postures that are not symmetrical the spine tends to get out of alignment. Old people tend to stoop and shrink in height. Even the normal upright posture of the correctly held spine is subject to slight subsidence every day due to the downward drag of gravity. Except in people who regularly stretch themselves symmetrically this automatic subsidence results in a slight shortening of the body every day toward evening. During sleep, when the body lies horizontal, the spine stretches itself out again, but over the years the daily subsidence may become

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chronic if nothing is done to counteract it. This is the reason why youthfulness is intimately related to suppleness and flexibility of the spine. If the spine is allowed to become stiff or its natural curvature displaced nerve activity is hampered, communication both of the central and sympathetic systems with the brain is impeded. The Yoga postures with which we shall deal have one primary purpose, namely to maintain the spinal column in the condition of flexibility, suppleness, and strength which are the natural concomitants of youth. The ulterior purpose is to assist in the awakening of all our dormant powers, but it would be foolish to attempt this on the insecure foundation of an ill-prepared physique. The bendings and stretchings of the preparatory exercises so far described, the disciplining of the abdominal muscles, the purification of the blood resulting from increased lung action, and the liberation of the spine from unnatural constrictions, all have the dominating aim of preserving the freshness and activity of body and mind which are the indispensable basis of fullness of life.

THE ASANAS: SEATED POSTURES*

The word *asana* means literally a seat, or a manner of sitting or holding oneself. It implies a posture in which one can remain immobile for a certain time, whether seated or otherwise. This term being now in common use we shall apply it to those postures peculiar to the Yoga system in which immobility is to be achieved.

* *The pronunciation of 'asana'*. The accent is on the first syllable. All the three a's are pronounced short, as in the English words abide, above, somewhat resembling the short 'u' sound in but, hut, cut. Confusion in transliteration must often arise from the fact that among the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet there are several that have no equivalent in the Latin alphabet. The letter transliterated as 'a' is sometimes long, sometimes short, sometimes silent, according to certain rules. Thus Yoga is often pronounced 'yog', and asana 'ussun'. But in *vajrasana* (thunderbolt posture) the first 'a' is as in father, so the pronunciation is 'vahjrussun'; but in *padmasana* (lotus posture) it is short, 'pudmussun'. It is strongly advisable to avoid Sanskrit terms except for those now commonly used in English, such as Yoga and Karma, or that have no satisfactory equivalent such as *uddiyana* (pronounced 'oodiyana'). To use difficult Sanskrit terms when there exist satisfactory English equivalents is pedantic and misleading. I knew a young man who considered it all but sacrilegious to call a headstand a headstand because he had seen in some book or other the Sanskrit term *shirshasana*, to which he applied the barbarous pronunciation sher-shah-sah-nah! When I told him the correct pronunciation he was horrified!

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Certain *asanas* are actually modes of being seated. They are:

1. *Lotus posture* (*padmasana*) (Fig. 2). This is the classic posture for meditation. In the West it is sometimes referred to as the Buddha posture, the Buddha often being depicted thus seated. Its advantage is that it forms a firm symmetrical seat on the buttocks and thighs while the spine remains naturally erect. Westerners often find some difficulty in accustoming themselves to this posture, but it comes easily to those who have been used to squatting from childhood as in the East, also to persons with loose joints, or equestrians who have stretched the crutch riding horseback. Its physiological benefits arise from the full stretching of the lumbar region and sciatic nerve, while the erect posture strengthens the spine and assures full expansion of the lung.*

2. *Half-lotus posture* (*siddhasana*) (Fig. 3). Those who cannot master the lotus posture can often sit comfortably in the half-lotus in which only one foot is placed on the opposite thigh or calf. It is sometimes preferred even by those to whom the lotus posture offers no difficulty.

3. *Cross-legged posture* (*sukasana*). This is illustrated in Figs. 7 and 26. It is the easiest and most satisfactory for the majority of westerners, but it requires special attention to holding the spine erect, particularly in the case of those whose knees cannot be pressed down to the floor and who tend to sit round-shouldered. The process of gradually pressing the knees downward is however beneficial to the joints, increasing their strength and flexibility, and helps to overcome arthritic and rheumatic tendencies.

4. *Sitting on the heels* (*vajrasana*) (Fig. 4). This is also an easy posture for most people. In this posture the spine remains erect without effort. For meditation and breathing exercises the hands rest on the thighs.

5. *Egyptian posture*, seated on a chair, the legs and thighs and thighs and torso forming right angles, with the spine erect. This can be used by those for whom none of the above postures are

* The equilateral triangle in which the body is framed in this posture metaphysically symbolizes the various trinities of powers by which man is governed: Brahma, Vishnu, Siva (Creation, Preservation, Transformation); Father, Son, Holy Ghost; body, mind, spirit; *sattva, rajas, tamas* (motion, inertia, poise); etc., etc. (see later, Chapter Eleven; also footnote, Chapter Nine, page 127).

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practicable. The posture is shown in Fig. 6, but the hands will rest on the thighs, with the eyes looking straight ahead. As already mentioned, the posture resembles that of many Egyptian statues.

All these postures are suitable for breathing exercises and meditation. The essential is that the posture shall be maintained immobile with comfort with the spine erect.

Of the many other *asanas* described in the ancient texts, some of them highly contortionist, only a few are necessary for purposes of health and the development of powers of mental concentration. They are best approached by way of preparatory exercises which stretch the muscles gradually so that the fixed postures are arrived at easily.*

We shall deal first with the two postures which involve the important principle of inverting the position of the body; these are the shoulderstand and headstand. The former of these is best approached by the beneficial practice of rolling on the back.

ROLLING ON THE BACK

The simplest method of limbering the spine for all purposes is to roll on it. This imparts a healthy massage, helps to correct vertebral defects and prepares for every form of back bending. It should be done on a mattress or soft rug.

Seated cross-legged, grasp the toes (passing the arms outside the knees) and bend forward (Fig. 25). Keeping the back well arched, roll backward until the shoulders and back of the head touch the ground, the chin always being pressed down into the chest throughout. In learning the movement roll the body in this way like a ball a few times without regard to the breathing. The correct breathing can then be added. From the forward-

* The more contortionist postures were formerly practised as a form of self-discipline by ascetics who saw merit in forcing their limbs into painful and unnatural knots, or who hoped by this means, coupled with extreme austerity of life, to stimulate psychic powers. Gradually the number of postures that are recognized to possess constructive physiological and psychic value was reduced to about thirty, of which again only about half are of use to ordinary citizens who wish to pursue a life of normal activity, especially in the West. The ability to perform spectacular contortionist feats is often mistaken by the ignorant for Yogic adeptship, and both in India and the West such self-styled 'Yogis' are to be found misleading simple-minded followers. If the performance of contortionist feats constituted 'Yoga' then every circus clown and acrobat would be entitled to call himself a 'yogi'!

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bent position (Fig. 25), without releasing the toes, straighten the spine, inhaling through the nose deeply (Fig. 26). Hold the breath an instant, then double the body forward again, exhaling with a whispered 'ho' breath through the mouth, and roll backward with the lungs empty, keeping the chin pressed down into the chest (Fig. 27). Roll forward again, inhaling through the nose, once more straightening the spine to the position of Fig. 26. Retain the breath an instant, then bend forward to the starting position (Fig. 25), exhaling again with a 'ho' breath through the mouth. The entire roll thus consists of four actions:

1. From the starting position, straighten up, inhaling;
2. Double up and roll backward, exhaling, keeping the chin pressed down;
3. Roll forward again, straightening up, inhaling;
4. Bend forward to the starting position, exhaling.

This completes one roll and the body is ready to repeat the movement. The exercise should not be hurried and the breathing should be deep, with nasal inhalations and oral exhalations.

Rhythmically executed, this movement brings numerous benefits. The maximum curvature when doubled up separates the vertebrae and stretches the whole spinal column from the neck to the coccyx. It frees the nerves and strengthens any weak discs. The alternation of bending and straightening brings all the back muscles into play. In the course of each roll the spine is twice bent and twice straightened, subjecting the viscera to gentle pressure and massage. The deep breathing fortifies the lungs and stimulates the circulation. The exercise is a combination of rhythmic breathing with rhythmic rolling. It should resemble the even movement of a rocking chair. When once the student's natural rhythm of movement has been discovered by a few trials the exercise is exceedingly soothing and can be repeated an unlimited number of times. For those who have time the best results will be achieved by slow repetition, with the eyes closed and the attention focused midway between the brows. Others will find it useful and pleasant to speed it up so that it becomes a vigorous form of the cleansing breath. The observant student who is willing to experiment will soon discover the speed and variations best suited to his particular case.

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THE SHOULDERSTAND (SARVANGASANA) (FIG. 29)

Rolling on the spine leads naturally to the shoulderstand, one of the easiest and most beneficial of the *asanas*. It consists in propping the body on the shoulders with the legs extended vertically. Its chief merit lies in the reversal of the influence of gravity on the internal organs. This influence is far greater than most people appreciate. Like all fluids, those of the body tend to flow downwards. The effect of gravity on the blood stream is most easily visible in the arms and legs. If an arm is held aloft it will be seen how the veins diminish in size through the draining of the blood, and how they fill up again when the arm is lowered. A glance at a skeleton shows how frail is our solid support, and even this is constantly subject to downward displacement, for our bones are not fastened rigidly together but are connected by elastic tendons, ligaments, and cartilage. The organs of the chest and abdominal cavity are held in place by ligaments and connective tissues which stretch. All are subject to the never-ceasing pull of gravity and have an inescapable tendency to sag and settle downward. A healthy and active organism is no exception, but in such a body, if it is kept in frequent motion through stretching and rhythmic movement, and if its digestive apparatus is never overloaded, the downward drag is held in check. Nevertheless it is always present. Especially in those whose duties involve standing for long periods gravity tends to cause varicose veins and prolapse of the viscera. The tendency is greater in women than in men, due to the wider female pelvis and the larger number of internal organs. By inverting the position of the body all such conditions are relieved and the tendency of the organs to drop is checked. The relief is especially marked in the legs and feet. Up-to-date medical practitioners treat the results of prolapse nowadays by placing the patient on a tilted plank or bench, with the legs raised higher than the head. The principle is of course taken from Yoga, but the more natural method of raising the body by one's own effort, thus strengthening it at the same time, is incomparably more effective.*

* The recognized biological fact that man has not yet adapted his anatomy to the erect posture has wider effects than difficulties of the circulation. It affects also the spine. The following passage appeared in a recent scientific article in *Life*. 'Animals

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The veins of the arms and legs, both in human beings and animals, are furnished with valves that assist the return of the venous blood to the heart against the force of gravity. Quadrupeds require no valves in the veins of the trunk of their bodies because the horizontal posture does not entail an uphill journey of the venous blood during its return to the heart. In man, however, although he has adopted the erect posture, such valves of the torso are still absent, with the result that from the pelvis upward the venous blood has to force its way uphill. The tendency to develop varicose veins in the lower part of the abdomen is consequently very marked, and it is accentuated by the fact that all the processes of the digestive organs have a general downward direction toward the rectum for the purpose of evacuation of waste matter. Hence hemorrhoids, prolapse of the pelvic organs, and other similar troubles. The necessity to counteract and remedy these difficulties thus becomes urgent. No method can equal the simplest, and the most simple and natural is to invert the position of the body in order to relieve the pressure and congestion. The relief is immediate, and in a few moments the ill effects of several hours of standing are neutralized.*

Further benefits derived from the shoulderstand lie in the pressure exerted on the region of the neck, massaging the thyroid and parathyroid glands, the larynx and pharynx, and all organs of the throat. It has the effect of strengthening and enriching the voice.

From simple rolling on the back the shoulderstand is acquired by releasing the toes in rolling backward and allowing the legs to straighten out loosely overhead. The hands are placed on the floor, giving support (Fig. 28). As the body rolls forward again

that move on all fours seldom have trouble with their spinal apparatus; their weight is mostly suspended from the posterior processes of the spinal column, held like a suspension bridge by strong bands of muscle. Man, however, defies gravity by standing erect. His back muscles have to work sixteen hours a day just to hold him up.' The consequent pressure on the vertebrae and intervening discs is also greatly relieved by inverting the position of the body from time to time.

* The cure or relief of varicose veins can be hastened by self-massage of the legs while sitting or reclining, the leg to be massaged being raised in the air. The massage is performed with the tips of the fingers, firmly drawing them upward from the ankles to the knees. Starting gently, the movement can gradually be done more vigorously. The slight exercise involved adds to the general benefit.

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the legs are re-crossed and the toes grasped once more with the fingers. This variation of the rolling exercise should be continued until it is easy.

The next stage is to straighten the legs vertically overhead. The support on the floor will now be given by the elbows, the hands being used to prop the body in the small of the back (Fig. 29). Again at first the posture should be held loosely and maintained only a second or two before rolling forward again as before. With practice the period of holding the posture can be extended and the body straightened up completely, pressing hard with the fingers into the small of the back. Eventually the body should become vertical, forming a right angle at the neck, with the chin pressed firmly into the chest. In this posture breathing cannot be deep but it should still be as regular as the restricted lungs allow.

The following movements may be executed while in the shoulderstand:

1. The 'abdominal squeeze' (*uddiyana*), pulling up the abdominal wall toward the chest (Figs. 14, 15).*
2. The 'scissors', opening and closing the legs sideward.
3. Pedalling the air rapidly as if on a bicycle.
4. Vibrating the body by shaking the stiffened knees vigorously. This has the stimulating effect of shaking up the whole body.

THE SHOULDER BALANCE (FIG. 30)

This is a variant of the shoulderstand. The support of the arms is removed and the hands are clamped at the sides of the thighs. The body is now held stationary, balanced on the back of the head, neck and shoulders. The legs cannot be kept quite vertical in this balance, but they should be held as straight up as possible. The posture intensifies the general effect of the shoulderstand.

THE HEADSTAND (SHIRSHASANA) (FIG. 34)

In the headstand the inversion of the body is complete. It is usually found to be a more comfortable posture than the shoulderstand as there is no constriction of the throat. It is

* This movement is described in Chapter Ten.

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necessary however to prepare the head and neck to receive the weight of the body. Most of the troubles of learning to stand on the head arise from neglecting this simple precaution. The spine having been prepared by rolling, the headstand snould be learnt by the following stages.

1. Assume a kneeling posture and sit back on the heels (*vajrasana* Fig. 4). Place the hands on the knees. Take a deep breath and exhale, bending forward during exhalation so that the forehead touches the floor just in front of the knees with the hands still on the knees or placed as in Fig. 31. Retain this position a few moments with the breath out. The head will thus get used to being lower than the body. Straighten up again slowly, inhaling. Repeat several times, gradually lengthening the period of touching the floor with the forehead. This should be practised until no discomfort is felt in holding the head low down.

2. When in the crouched position raise the back so as to exert pressure on the crown of the head (Fig. 32). Press the back forward a few times to accustom the head and neck to this pressure then recover, sitting on the heels, inhaling, and repeat. This also should be practised until it can be done quite comfortably.

3. The first attempts to raise the legs from the ground may now be made. When in the crouched position, place the hands round the crown of the head (Fig. 33) so that the tips of the fingers meet, thus forming a frame. The elbows must be held close to the sides of the knees. The next move must depend on the learner's structure; of the various alternatives he must find the best for himself by experiment. The following are usually found quickest.

Raising the body to the position of Fig. 32, but with the head framed as in Fig. 33, press up off the ground, either with both feet together or with one foot first as is found most convenient. The back must immediately be hunched so as to bring the knees close to the face. The first attempt at kicking off must be made *very gently*, with no effort to get anywhere near the actual headstand, but merely to be able to lift the body slightly off the floor about one inch and immediately drop back again. The movement resembles a tiny hop. The object of this is

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not yet to stand on the head but to get used to the first stage of the movement, consisting in just getting the feet off the floor.

Instead of this, some find it easier, from the crouched position of Fig. 31 but with the head framed as in Fig. 33, to heave the body forward gently until it is felt that the weight is coming off the legs. The secret of success lies in *not* straightening the body, but, on the contrary, *keeping it as hunched up as possible*, with the knees always close to the face. Again, the moment it is felt that the legs are coming a little way off the floor, drop them back without making any attempt yet to go further. Repeat this little hop three times and straighten up for a breather. Every mishap that has ever occurred in learning to stand on the head has been brought about by trying to achieve it too quickly. For most people the slow way is the quick way and also the safe way. Whether one attempts it by the first or the second of the above methods will depend upon the person's build. There cannot possibly be one way equally suited to all. Men and women, the elderly and the young, the tall and the short, the bulky and the slender, the naturally agile and those who are more stiff, all must go about it somewhat differently, yet all without exception must pass through the stages above described and learn first to make the little hunched-up hops. Once these have been achieved and can be done three times in succession at each trial, and this repeated several times with ease, *then* is the moment very gently to increase the effort put into the whole movement. Again, mishaps occur only through going too fast. The effort should be increased very gradually indeed, until it is felt that little by little one is approaching the point at which, still as hunched up as possible like a ball, the body is less and less inclined to drop back to the ground. The point will finally be arrived at when it simply does not drop back, but stays balanced in the half-way position (Fig. 33). This point is the key to final achievement, for every time one ever does a head-stand one will pass through this 'control point' both in going up and descending. The half-way point is therefore the point to aim at, and no attempt should be made to straighten the legs vertically until one can stand firmly in this uncomfortable but safe and controlling half-way position. When at last the legs are

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straightened the finishing touch is to straighten the back and point the toes to give a graceful line to the figure (Fig. 34).

The learner must be warned that the temptation and tendency to do the wrong things in achieving this interesting posture are very strong. Always one wants to straighten the legs too soon. Many beginners try to straighten them even before arriving at the half-way position, and of course flop to the ground and perhaps bruise themselves. The temptation to try to straighten the legs recurs as soon as one reaches the half-way position, even for a moment; then the learner kicks himself off balance and again down he comes full of bruises. There are certainly rare cases of persons achieving the headstand very easily, almost at the first go, but they are not to be regarded as typical. The typical case is that of the person who has to try over and over again, but if he will go about it patiently he will almost certainly achieve success, for the number of those who for one reason or another cannot do it is very few. I have known cases of both ladies and gentlemen who after many attempts, perhaps lasting over many months of daily practice, finally succeeded against all their own expectations, becoming as expert and steady as anybody else, and of course getting the greater joy and satisfaction out of it because their efforts to succeed had been so long and arduous. Moreover, their health was much benefited through the preparatory stages which strengthened the body and developed the stability which enabled them to succeed. Nobody should despair. Let the learner only bear in mind the important point that the secret of success is to perform all preparatory movements in as hunched up a position as possible and he will be safe. Even if he rolls over he cannot hurt himself as long as he remains hunched up, as he will discover to his pleasure through having learnt to roll to start with. The final straightening of the legs vertically is the very last thing of all, and that too should be done very gradually, feeling the way not inch by inch but millimetre by millimetre. If any individual has the good fortune to do it quicker, well and good, but let him not be so hardy as to urge others less agile to follow his example too rapidly.

By this gentle and gradual method I have put several thousands of people successfully on their heads, to their great

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advantage and their moral and spiritual as well as physical benefit, for the resultant feeling of self-confidence is reflected in other fields of enterprise. The oldest was a lady of seventy-four. A London solicitor of sixty-five, gauky and ill-shaped, whom I had judged ill-suited to this feat, confided to me that it was nonetheless his fixed ambition to be able to stand on his head for a very touching reason—it would convince his sceptical wife of the value of the Yoga studies on which he had embarked. I accordingly gave him some special assistance, with the result that within a month he turned up with radiant countenance and announced with breathless excitement, 'I did it this morning in front of my wife, it is the happiest day of my life!'

The above is the quickest and safest way to learn the headstand without assistance. As mentioned, some will pass through the various stages more rapidly than others, but even those who take longer or fail despite all efforts will not have lost their time. The repeated forward bending and straightening of the first two stages, combined with the deep inhalations and exhalations, will have strengthened the lungs, spine, and neck, and the reorientation of the circulation of the blood is of great benefit in adjusting blood pressure. If the learner has anyone to assist him the assistance will not be needed until he is near the halfway control point, when a gentle helping hand may serve to steady him. The patient and persevering method is greatly preferable to trying to learn by kicking the feet up against a wall, for instance, for it is very easy to fall and bruise oneself or crick the neck by such methods.

The headstand posture should not be held long at each performance. A few seconds suffice at first. Greater benefits will be gained by repeating it several times for short periods than by one prolonged effort which may strain the neck and cause discomfort in the head. Those rare individuals who go in for advanced Hatha Yoga are made to hold the headstand for hours at a time without moving, always of course under the watchful eye of their special instructor, but for ordinary purposes a minute or two at a time is sufficient.

The best of all headstand exercises is a series of headstands executed smoothly and evenly to a rhythmic count of eight. It is performed as follows. Assume the kneeling position sitting on

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the heels. On count one, exhale with a whispered 'ho' breath and bend forward to the crouched position, with the hands framing the head. On count two, with the lungs empty rise to the halfway position (Fig. 33). On count three, extend the legs vertically (Fig. 34). On count four, bend them again to halfway (Fig. 33). On count five, drop gently to the crouched position. On counts six, seven, eight, straighten up to the starting position, inhaling deeply through the nose, and immediately recommence the sequence. The counts must be quite even and the movement continuous. This is what demands control. The exercise is a form of cleansing breath with the addition of a series of rhythmic movements. A series of twelve to twenty rhythmic headstands performed in this manner is a most beneficial exercise.

Various other movements are also advantageous in the headstand position:

1. The 'abdominal squeeze' (Figs. 14 and 15) as also in the shoulderstand.

2. Exercising the ankles by moving the feet up and down from the ankles, also twisting them sideward and with a rotary motion; these are excellent movements for strengthening the feet and counteracting the ill effects of prolonged standing.

3. Vibration of the body by shaking the stiffened knees vigorously.

4. The 'scissors', opening and closing the legs sideward (Fig. 35).

5. Swinging the legs forward and backward instead of sideward.

6. Lowering the legs slowly with straight knees at right angles (Fig. 36). This movement can be continued to the ground; it greatly strengthens the abdominal muscles.

The student may also practise rising into the headstand straight from the feet instead of from a kneeling position, and descending similarly. When expert, he should also practise rising and descending as fast as possible and as slowly as possible, in both cases always evenly and rhythmically.

When proficiency is acquired the headstand can be performed without any prior preparatory movements and held for any period that may be found comfortable; but as above

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remarked its greatest value for most purposes lies not in continuous maintenance of the posture, but in the repetition of several periods of moderate duration, for the repeated bending and straightening during ascent and descent have a tonic effect on all organs. In this alternation of positions lies the best means of correcting internal disorders, counteracting tendencies toward prolapse of any kind, and adjusting irregularities of blood pressure. Sinus trouble and migraine often respond favourably to headstand treatment. The sinus openings being on the upper side the cavities are able to drain more easily when the body is inverted. In the case of migraine it is probably the general readjustment of the circulation and the regularization of the activity of the nervous system that brings the relief.*

* It is the experience of many that a series of headstands performed in succession has a remarkably refreshing effect on the organism through the rapid breaking up of fatigue accumulations and the stimulation of the circulation. A cabinet minister told Diana FitzGerald, with whom he was studying in London, that when beset by fatigue during long night sessions of the House of Commons, he made a practice of leaving the chamber from time to time to do a few headstands in some secluded place, which enabled him to retain a feeling of freshness throughout the most exhausting sessions.

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7

Asanas: (2) Sideslip, Bull, Spinal Twist

THE postures and movements we shall now study deal with lateral and spiral twists of the body with the aim of developing flexibility, suppleness, and sinuosity, factors which play an important part, as has already been pointed out, in the preservation of youthfulness. A depressing feature of this democratic age is the complacency with which, despite a worthy national addiction to games and sport, physical degeneration at an early age is nevertheless often accepted as a normal phenomenon. It is true that great strides have been made in public health and hygiene with consequent extension of the expectation of life, but this improvement applies only in a general sense; the individual may still grow fat and unhealthy through ignorance or self-indulgence without social ostracism. The Yoga ideal is the personal ideal, it is aristocratic in the true sense of the cultivation of *aristos*, the best, the highest, choicest, most select. Radiant health, being pre-eminently aristocratic in this sense, is sought not only for personal happiness but also for efficient social function; but together with robust health, beauty and elegance should march hand in hand. The true Yogi, supremely indifferent to senseless feats such as lifting vast weights with balloon-like biceps or bending iron bars with his teeth, seeks health that is both useful and comely, distinguished primarily by strength of nerve rather than of muscle, resilience rather than toughness, alertness and quickness of response rather than brute force, resistance to disease even in a frail body rather than the snorting braggardism of the professional strong man. The Yoga 'Bull' is one of the most elegant of postures, conducive strangely

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enough to qualities not usually associated with the beast. The explanation of the name will appear in due course.

The Sideslip, Bull, and Spinal Twist are all designed to develop grace of carriage, besides at the same time strengthening the spine. They also have special remedial value in rheumatic conditions, particuarly lumbago and sciatica. All require initial preparation after which they lead naturally one to the other.

ARMSWING PREPARATION (FIG. 37)

To loosen the torso and prepare it for the lateral twist of the sideslip, the arms should be swung in a complete circle round the body, the feet remaining stationary. The movement is as follows. Standing erect, raise the arms to shoulder level and swing them as far as possible to the left, twisting the torso to allow the left arm to reach to the maximum extent behind the body, with the right arm bent so that the thumb touches the left shoulder. The head is turned at the same time to look over the left shoulder (Fig. 27). From this extreme, the arms are swung round at shoulder level to the corresponding position on the right, the head turning to look over the right shoulder. They are then swung back again and the movement is thus continued. One swing to right and left constitutes one round. Inhale during one round, exhale during the next. Or, two complete rounds can be performed on each inhalation and each exhalation. To achieve this the movement should not be hurried, the value of the exercise lies primarily in the full sweep and extent of the swing and the resulting twisting of the body. The movement must be graceful and rhythmic. Slight pressure should be exerted at the extreme points of the swing in order to develop the greatest flexibility and suppleness. A few rounds will suffice at the start until the muscles are trained. Later the exercise can be repeated *ad lib.*

THE SIDESLIP (FIGS. 38 AND 39)

The first stage of this graceful and beneficial movement is a development of the above. Seated on the heels with the spine erect, raise the arms to shoulder level and swing them horizontally to the right, at the same time sliding the body off the heels on to the floor to the left. The head is turned to look

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over the right shoulder. Now swing the arms at shoulder level to the left, raising the body and lifting it over the heels to the corresponding position on the right, with the head turned over the left shoulder. Alternate these two movements, lifting the body over from side to side. The legs must be held close together and the knees remain firmly planted on the floor throughout. This movement produces a severe stretching of one side of the body at the same time as severe contraction of the other. More than any other exercise it regulates the hips, squeezing off superfluous flesh and restoring the waistline to its natural state, provided always the correct rules of eating are observed.

If difficulty is experienced in holding the legs together with the knees on the ground, then at first the knees may be parted to make the retention of balance easier, but every effort should be made to avoid placing a hand on the floor for support. Let the right knee stick out to the right when sliding over to the left, and vice versa, until the muscles are loosened up and the movement can be done correctly. Even so, remedial massage is imparted to the kidneys and the ascending and descending sections of the colon; the generative organs are benefited and the urinary and evacuatory systems stimulated.

At first it may be difficult to regulate the breathing, and the movement should be practised alone, allowing the breathing to take care of itself. But as soon as some control is established over the movement the breathing should be regulated so that inhalation takes place during the passage in one direction and exhalation on the return journey. Breathing cannot be deep owing to the constriction of the lung in the bent position, but it must be rhythmic.

When the sideslip can be performed easily in this manner, with both knees firmly on the ground throughout, the stretching value can be enhanced by clasping the hands with the palms turned outward and swinging them thus. As a finishing touch the arms should be extended overhead with palms turned upward as in the earlier stretching exercises (Fig. 39). In sliding to the right the raised arms will be brought over as far as possible to the left, always in the straight line of the body with the eyes looking over the left shoulder; in sliding to the left the positions will be reversed. This is a movement which will

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assuredly reward the student who perseveringly practises it, beginning gently and developing it gradually until perfection is attained. On account of its elegance it should appeal particularly to women, for whom it has the further advantage of imparting a gentle and stimulating massage to the internal female organs.

Two final touches remain. The sideslip should be done first at a moderate speed according to each student's inclination, but its value may be increased by turning it into a slow-motion exercise of masterly control in which every separate point of the movement is governed consciously, the moments of touching the ground in sliding off and of parting from the ground in raising the body again being imperceptible to practitioner and observer alike. In this case the breathing must be adjusted to suit the student's ability according to the slowness of the motion.

Finally the sideslip should be practised as an *asana*, that is, as a fixed posture. When sitting on the heels take a deep breath, exhale, slide off into the posture and hold it immobile for as long as the breath can be held out. Then raise the body again to the heels, lower the arms and take several recovery breaths before proceeding to repeat the posture on the other side.

THE BULL POSTURE (FIG. 40)

To arrive in this posture, execute a sideslip to the left, extend the right leg, bring it round to the front and pass it over the left knee, pulling it back close to the body and pressing the right knee down over the left knee as low as it will go. Straighten the spine, extend the hands one above the other over the knees, and draw in the lower abdomen. On looking down at the feet it will be seen that they protrude on either side somewhat resembling the horns of a bull, hence the name given to the posture. It should be held for a time, and the position of the legs then changed over.

The value lies in the stretch imparted to the sciatic nerve of the leg that is placed uppermost. If the student is actually suffering from sciatica the posture may cause discomfort, particularly along the thigh from the hip, on account of the stretching. This can be relieved by placing the upper leg over the lower only as far as it will comfortably go and vigorously

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massaging the aching part with the fingers. The sciatic nerve is one of the longest and largest on the body and is easily reached by such massage, which loosens it. The circulation is stimulated with a fresh supply of blood, and the nerve is gradually stretched until its elasticity is restored. Little by little the posture can be brought nearer to that indicated above, when the fullest degree of stretching is effected. The period of retention of the posture will depend upon the capacity and requirements of the practitioner. Starting with a few seconds it can be extended, coupled with the self-massage indicated, to effect complete cure. The back also is strengthened and tone imparted to the lower part of the body. When the posture is held immobile breathing should be slow and deep, the eyes should be closed and focused between the brows, and thought centred on bringing health and vigour to the intestines, the eliminatory system, and the lower limbs.

THE SPINAL TWIST (ARDHA-MATSYENDRASANA) (FIGS. 41 AND 42)

To arrive in this complicated posture, sit on the ground with the legs outstretched. Pass the right foot under the left knee, and with the left hand pull the right foot close to the left buttock. Draw the left foot up to the right side of the right knee. The left knee will now be jutting up in the air over the right thigh with the left foot flat on the ground close to the right knee. Raise the right arm, pass it across the body to the left and bring it back so that the right elbow presses against the left side of the left knee, pushing the left knee to the right. With the right hand grasp the ankle of the left foot, pressing the left knee still further to the right. This has the effect of bringing a spiral twist into the spine, which must be further accentuated by gently forcing the trunk of the body to the left, turning the head at the same time to look over the left shoulder, and passing the left hand as far as possible behind the back to reach the right hip or thigh from behind.

Alternatively, the head may be turned to look as far as possible over the right shoulder (Fig. 41). The essential is to produce the maximum of twist and pressure in the trunk and all limbs.

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Instead of passing the free hand behind the body, it may be held in the position shown in Fig. 42 with the shoulder thrust well back. The posture is then sometimes called the Sphinx.

When expert at getting into this posture quickly it will be found easier to do it with the lungs empty, after an exhalation. While the posture is held the breathing cannot be deep but it should be rhythmic. At first the posture should be held only a few seconds, the period being extended *ad lib* with practice. It is essential to perform the posture on both sides equally. To arrive in the corresponding position on the other side the terms right and left in the above directions will be reversed.

This *asana* is a remarkable invention. By it all the internal organs and all the limbs are directly affected, yet everywhere the pressure is even and symmetrical. The physical effects are far-reaching, the derivative mental and moral influence no less so. It has a refreshing effect on the nervous system comparable only to the headstand. Intestines, pancreas, kidneys, stomach, and liver are subjected to gentle and symmetrical massage. Though effort certainly has to be exerted to arrive in the posture and hold it there must be no violent forcing. If it is found too difficult at first to get into the full twist it may be made easier by giving oneself support with the hands on the ground at various stages. Just what support or temporary easing of the posture is chosen must depend upon the build and condition of the learner. No fixed procedure can be laid down for all. But if by experimentation the student will get a picture into his mind of the final posture and coax his limbs into the nearest combination he can, not hesitating to give himself support as required to suit his particular case, then if he has the patience and perseverance he will certainly succeed in the end, to his great physical, mental, and spiritual satisfaction. For conquest of self in any form and degree is a spiritual conquest. This posture is of great value in restoring grace to the figure, elongating the torso and limbs, stretching the skeleton, and imparting elegance and pliability to the whole body.

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8

Asanas: (3) Forward and Backward Bendings

THE *asanas* included in this group are those which give the maximum of bending capacity to the body coupled with stimulating pressure on the viscera and the greatest degree of stretching to the spinal column. As in the case of all fixed *asanas* which have to be held immobile, these also should be preceded by suitable preparatory exercises which will render them easier and protect the learner against strained muscles.

For this purpose the stretching breaths, rotational exercises, and back rolling already described will be helpful. The body should also be bent forward and backward from the standing position. A deep preparatory breath is taken, the shoulders are hunched, the head drops on the chest, the arms are allowed to droop in front of the body. Exhaling, the whole body droops forward, with the spine curved to the maximum, bending until the hands touch the floor (Fig. 43). The knees are held stiff and straight. In the case of those who at first cannot touch the floor the bending should take place with short gentle downward pressures to ease the spine gradually into its unaccustomed curvature. When the impulse to inhale appears the body is straightened up and one or two recovery breaths should be taken before repeating the exercise.

To bend the body rearward, stand with feet apart, brace the head and shoulders backward, exhale and gently bend, gradually extending the bend with practice. The movement is the same as shown in Fig. 12 but without extending the arms overhead; the knees also should not be held stiff but relax to aid the bending. As soon as the impulse to inhale reappears

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the body should be straightened and recovery breaths taken.

Both the above movements must be performed in an unhurried manner with abundant deep breathing during recovery. Gentle but persistent effort will achieve more lasting and graceful results than any attempt to force the pace.

FORWARD BEND, PRONE (PASCHIMOTTANASANA) (FIG. 44)

This is the foregoing forward bend executed on the floor. Lying flat, take a deep breath, raise the trunk of the body, extend the arms, and, exhaling, bend forward to grasp the toes with the fingers, keeping the legs straight and the back of the knees firmly pressed on the floor. Bring the forehead as close to the knees as possible. Hold the posture only a second or two at first, gradually extending the period. On loosening the grasp, return to the flat position, relax, and take several recovery breaths before repeating. If difficulty is experienced in grasping the toes, the ankles can be gripped instead and the stretch then gradually extended.

A variant of the above is as follows (Fig. 45). Extending one leg, bend the other, keeping the side of the knee on the ground, and place the foot on the thigh of the extended leg with the heel pressed into the groin. Bend forward, exhaling, and grasp the toes of the extended leg, the knee of this leg being pressed firmly on the ground. Maintain the posture immobile as long as the breath is held out. Repeat, changing legs.

PLOUGH POSTURE, OVERHEAD BACKWARD BEND (HALASANA) (FIGS. 46 AND 47)

This posture is called the Plough from its supposed resemblance to a primitive form of that instrument. Lying flat with hands at the sides, raise the legs straight to the vertical and continue to pass them overhead, lifting the body as in the shoulderstand. Lower the legs with straight knees behind the head until the toes touch the ground. Hold the posture only a second or two to begin with, gradually extending the period.

By joining the hands behind the neck with the elbows pressed on the ground the stretch is accentuated (Fig. 47).

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As a variation, the legs may be drawn up to the ears with the knees touching the ground (Fig. 48) and then straightened again.

In both the above *asanas* the abdominal organs and the pelvis are subjected to powerful pressure, the spinal vertebræ are stretched to the maximum, the dorsal muscles strengthened, and the region of the throat given valuable massage.

YOGAMUDRA (FIG. 49)

This *asana* produces a yet greater stretching of the muscles of the upper part of the back. Adopt the lotus posture (Fig. 1). Take a deep breath and, exhaling, bend forward so that the forehead touches the floor as close to the knees as possible. Pass the hands behind the back and grasp the right wrist with the left hand, or alternatively interlock the fingers, and raise the arms until they are vertical. Hold the posture as long as the breath can be held out.

This posture intensifies the stretching of the muscles of the upper part of the back, while the pressure of the heels into the groin administers valuable massage to the organs of the pelvic basin. The posture can be performed more easily in the ordinary cross-legged position, but the value of the pressure in the groins is then lost.

TORTOISE POSTURE (GARBHASANA) (FIG. 50)

A further complex *asana* involving the crossing of the legs as in the lotus position is the so-called Tortoise, also sometimes referred to as the child-in-the-womb posture from its doubled-up appearance. Here the body is balanced on the coccyx, the arms thrust between the calves and the thighs and bent so as to touch the cheeks with the fingers. The resultant pressures in the abdominal region are similar to those in the Yogamudra, and the spine is fully arched. Due to anatomical structure this posture is usually easier for women than men.

THE 'MALTESE CROSS'

The 'Maltese Cross', so-called because the movements roughly mark the symmetrical pattern of this cross, is a combination of exercises and postures to be performed in continuous slow

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motion. For study it can conveniently be divided into sections which are subsequently pieced together in sequence without stop.

Section one. Lie prone on the back with the arms extended to the sides at shoulder level. Keeping the knees straight and toes pointed, slowly raise the legs to the vertical (Fig. 51). The straight legs are then lowered to the left, forming a right angle with the body (Fig. 52), until they just touch the floor, without resting there, and are then raised again to the vertical (Fig. 51). This movement is aided by pressing on the floor with the left hand. The right shoulder must be kept down throughout and the face must not turn to the side. From the vertical the legs are then lowered to the corresponding point on the right side and again return to the vertical, the movement being regulated by pressure with the right hand. The knees are held straight and the toes pointed throughout. From the vertical the legs are lowered slowly to the starting position and the body relaxes. All movements are performed slowly and evenly.

Section two. Raising the straight legs, with the toes pointed, just off the floor, move them slowly round to the left at floor level to the position of Fig. 52. From this point raise them to the vertical (Fig. 51), pass them over to the corresponding position on the right side, and thence move them slowly at floor level to the starting point. Rest a moment if necessary, then raise the feet again just off the floor and reverse the slow swinging movement; that is, swing the legs to the right-angle position on the right, raise them to the vertical, pass them over to the right-angle position on the left, and bring them slowly back at floor level to the starting position, lower them to the floor, and relax.

Section three. Again the straight legs are raised to the vertical (Fig. 51), but this time the raising is accompanied by a movement of the arms which slowly slide over the floor until the hands arrive at the sides of the body. Pressing now on the floor with the hands, the body is raised into a shoulderstand (Fig. 29), the arms being bent at the elbows so that the forearms may prop the body in the back. Care must be taken that this movement with the forearms is not done abruptly, which would spoil the even rhythrn of the exercise; the hands must move up deliberately and gracefully. This concludes section three, and

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when practising it the body returns to the starting point to relax.

Section four. This begins from the shoulderstand as above indicated. Gently dropping the hands again to the floor, the legs are lowered behind the head with straight knees until the pointed toes touch the floor as far behind the head as possible (Fig. 46). When the legs are fully outstretched the knees are slowly bent and drawn up to the ears (Fig. 48), then outstretched again. The journey back to the starting point now commences. The body rises slowly into a second shoulder stand, the forearms being raised accordingly, the posture is held immobile for a brief moment, the hands are then lowered again, the body bends slightly at the hips to facilitate its slow descent, the legs drop slightly behind the head (but with knees straight) as the spine is lowered to the floor, the head tilts backward, and the legs descend slowly to the floor at the starting point. During the latter movement the arms are slowly extended again to the sides at the level of the shoulders as at the beginning.

The practice of each section must be followed by deep relaxation.

In the finished performance all four sections are executed without interruption; that is to say, at the conclusion of section one the feet do not touch down but immediately enter upon the slow movement to the left and perform the wheel-like pattern which brings them round to the starting point from the right; there again there is no pause, the wheel-like motion is reversed, and at its termination the legs are at once brought slowly up into the shoulderstand without a halt. The momentary halt in the shoulderstand is the first cessation of movement since the start. Section four is then added as described.

It is impossible to overestimate the value, both physical and moral, of this graceful sequence when executed in slow controlled motion. From the gymnastic point of view all the muscles of the legs and torso come into play, those of the abdominal wall and back playing the prime role throughout. But the highest value lies in the concentrated attention and mental control which the exercise demands at every instant of the proceeding. It is a study in slow motion demanding a high degree of concentration at every point. From beginning to end there must be

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no change of speed or rhythm except for the two moments of immobility in the shoulderstand; these two short halts enhance the beauty of the exercise and afford the practicant an instant's respite during which to check up on his performance. Every detail has to be studied, even the raising and lowering of the hands when they prop the back; these small gestures must not be performed abruptly but carefully and gracefully in the rhythm of the general movement.

At first, of course, the learner need not worry about finishing touches. Some cannot even keep their legs consistently straight with the toes pointed. The learner should do it at first simply as best he can, gradually improving it as he goes along. In the end the points that impart finish are the following: firstly, keeping the legs absolutely straight except for the moment when the knees are drawn up to the ears; secondly, keeping the toes well pointed throughout; thirdly, maintaining an even speed of movement at all times; fourthly, regulating the movements of the hands and arms so that, when these move, they shall do so in keeping with the general rhythm; and finally, facial expression. Any distortion of features expressive of exertion or strain is a concession to weakness and spoils the effect for the onlooker. However great the strain may be in fact, in the finished performance there must be no indication of it. The highest achievement of all is to produce an impression of simplicity, ease and grace. The face must reflect a state of mental peace which may by no means correspond to the actual feeling. But, after all, what is this but an act of good behaviour, which in every cultured person must frequently belie inward sentiments that are found expedient and often kindly to conceal. The 'Maltese Cross', in a word, should be regarded as a valuable exercise in self-control.

The exercise is made easier and more attractive to both performer and viewer when it is performed to music. A melodious composition in slow and even rhythm should be selected. Bach's well-known *Air on the G-string* is excellently suited for the purpose, its measured phrases lending themselves well to guide the performer through the respective sections of the sequence. This piece of music takes about four minutes. If it is desired to render the sequence less of a test of endurance by

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speeding it up slightly, Chopin's *Study in A Flat, Opus 25, No. 1*, may be recommended. It takes about three minutes. The movements must be so calculated that the sections coincide exactly with the musical phrases and terminate precisely with the final cadence. All this constitutes an exercise in mental concentration and physical control and endurance of a high order, invariably imparting, in addition to the physical benefits, a sense of spiritual satisfaction at the achievement. It is suited equally to men and women, but in women its value is enhanced by the strength and tone imparted to all the organs of the pelvic region, so that it becomes an excellent means of training for childbirth and of toning up the system again when a suitable period has elapsed following confinement.

STOMACH BALANCE (FIG. 53)

This is the simplest of the backward bending postures leading up to the Bow (Fig. 55).

Lie flat, face downward, with the arms extended in front. Raise the arms and legs off the floor as high as possible. The limbs must be held straight, with the head pressed upward.

At first the posture should be tried with empty lungs to get used to it, then it should be done with the breath held after a deep inhalation. The higher the limbs are lifted, the more effective the posture. Beginning with two or three seconds the period of holding may be extended *ad lib.* Relax completely after each performance.

The entire nervous system is toned up by this posture. It tends to elongate the body, stretches the nerves and strengthens the back and the muscles of the abdominal wall.

COBRA POSTURE (BHUJANGASANA) (FIG. 54)

The next stage is the cobra posture, deriving its name from its supposed resemblance to a cobra preparing to strike. Lying flat on the stomach, place the hands on the floor at the sides of the neck. Take a deep breath, and, exhaling, press the body upward until the arms are straight. As much as possible of the lower part of the body must remain in contact with the ground. This intensifies the bend in the small of the back. The head is raised and pressed upward. Hold the posture until the impulse

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to breathe appears, lower the body again, inhaling, and relax with several recovery breaths, turning the head to the side and resting it on the arms. With practice the posture can also be performed with full lungs, maintaining it immobile as long as the breath is held, and exhaling slowly as the body descends.

Elasticity of the spine is increased by this posture. Both by this and the former bendings the vertebræ are moved in such a manner that increased blood supply reaches the nerve ganglions. The kidneys are subjected to healthy pressure, stimulating their action. At the same time the abdominal wall is stretched and strengthened and the ascending, transverse, and descending sections of the colon are toned up, promoting peristalsis with improved bowel action.

THE BOW (DHANURASANA) (FIG. 55)

The bow posture is an intensification of the cobra. The feet are grasped at the ankles and the legs pulled off the floor, the body thus being made to resemble a bow. The posture should first be done with empty lungs, after exhalation of a full preparatory breath. It should be held only a second or two at first, the period being gradually extended *ad lib.* Those who find it difficult to pull both feet off the floor should pull one foot up at a time until the muscles are stretched. The benefits derived are the same as from the cobra, the effect being intensified by the extra stretch.

THE PILLARS (FIG. 56)

The pillars posture resembles the bow, but is performed from a kneeling position. Kneeling upright, lean backward and plant the closed fists on the soles of the feet. Thrust the chest forward and the head backward to achieve the maximum of stretch. When the posture can be performed comfortably it should be done with held breath, the position being maintained throughout one breath retention.

A useful variation of the pillars may be done from a sitting position on a chair (Fig. 57). The body is raised by pressing with the hands on the sides of the seat. The chest is then thrust forward and the head thrown back. The back of the neck or

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shoulders may rest on the back of the chair. If necessary, the feet may be tucked inside the legs of the chair for steadiness.

This posture is especially valuable for persons who have to sit at a desk or typewriter for long hours. An ordinary office chair is the most suitable for the purpose, as shown in the illustration. It quickly rectifies the tendency to become round-shouldered through much bending forward, and has a most refreshing effect after a period of concentrated work.

THE WHEEL POSTURE (CHAKRASANA) (FIG. 58)

This is a more drastic backbend than the former. It is achieved either by dropping backward from a standing backbend, or by pushing up from the ground with the hands after first raising the body on the feet and head. The nearer the head and feet can then be drawn to each other the closer will be the resemblance to a wheel. In an extreme form the wheel posture is shown in the illustration facing page 80.

LOCUST POSTURE (SALABHASANA) (FIG. 59)

This posture derives its name from its supposed resemblance to a locust whose legs stick up rearward into the air.

Lying on the stomach, take a deep breath and exhale. Press on the ground forcefully with the fists placed at the side of the hips, and raise the straight legs into the air. Hold the posture for the period of keeping the breath out. Then lower the legs, inhaling, and take several recovery breaths.

Those who find this posture difficult may begin by raising each leg separately, which will be found quite simple. In the full posture the muscles of the abdomen and thighs are subjected to high tension, strengthening the abdominal wall.

PEACOCK POSTURE (MAYURASANA) (FIG. 60)

This is so called because when the legs are raised they are supposed to resemble a peacock about to spread its tail.

Kneeling on the floor with the forehead touching the ground, place the hands and forearms in such a position, with the fingers pointing rearward, that the body can be lowered on to the elbows which then dig into the abdominal wall at the ascending and descending sections of the colon. Gradually manipulate the

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body so that it can be raised from the ground balanced on the hands with the elbows pressed in near the groins. Whether the knees or head are lifted first in doing this does not matter. Hold the posture a few seconds, and descend by reversing the movements. The posture can be executed with full lungs and must be followed by complete relaxation.

Due to the pressure on the colon this posture has a powerful effect in stimulating the evacuatory functions. The pressure reaches the hepatic, splenic, and sigmoid flexures, breaking up any congestion that may tend to gather at those points. At the same time the liver, pancreas and kidneys are energetically massaged and all the viscera toned up.

Owing to the delicacy of the female internal organs this posture is not suited to women.

FISH POSTURE (MATSYASANA) (FIG. 61)

This posture is so called because it facilitates floating on water.

Adopting the lotus posture, grasp the toes with the fingers, allow the body to roll backward to the ground and lower the locked legs forward to the floor. Press the head back as far as possible, pull on the feet and draw up the chest so that it is raised from the floor forming an arch. Finally place the hands behind the head to intensify the upward stretch. Hold the posture as long as is comfortable.

In this *asana* the legs, abdomen, and chest are powerfully stretched. In particular the neck, stretched backward, is benefited, the thyroid and parathyroid glands receiving a valuable stimulus. Breathing should continue as evenly as possible while holding the posture. Owing to the stretching of the larynx and trachea the vocal organs are improved. The pituitary and pineal glands are toned up, their important physiological functions being stimulated. This posture, in fact, being one which can be maintained for several minutes, acts as a powerful tonic to the entire system.

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9

Intestinal Control: (1) The Art of Eating

CONTROL of the intestines is of vital importance in practical Yoga. The sluggish bowel and protruding paunch are so prevalent a feature of twentieth century middle-age physique that, like defective lung action, they are widely accepted as normal. This must not be ascribed entirely to sloth and self-indulgence, our system of education is at fault, sheer ignorance of ourselves and of the rudiments of anatomy and physiology is largely responsible for a manner of living which so often contravenes the laws of nature.

A burden of superfluous flesh, like every other abdominal defect, acts as an obstruction to the free working of the mind. Nor is this refuted by the brilliance of some fat men and women or the bold front which suffering individuals often manage to show to the world despite internal derangements. If adipose tissue could be removed by the wave of a magic wand few fat people, men or women, would refuse the offer. They know full well that they would be happier both in body and mind without the excess baggage encumbering them. Study of one's own self should always start with a searching examination into one's physical condition and the working of the stomach, liver, and bowels. If these are defective it would be as absurd to expect the mental faculties to operate with full efficiency as it would be to expect superior performance from a motor car with defective plugs or blocked exhaust pipes. One of the author's revered instructors used to express this truth trenchantly: 'The path to divinity,' he used to say, 'begins not at the rectory but at the rectum.'

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The abdominal exercises of Yoga have the effect, if persisted in, of shaking off every ounce of superfluous flesh and restoring the abdominal region to its natural shape, at the same time administering vigorous internal massage to the small and large bowel, stomach, liver, pancreas, spleen and kidneys, and increasing the flow of blood to these organs. Digestion is vastly improved, enjoyment of food enhanced, sleep becomes more restful, the perceptive faculties are rendered more acute and mental activity is quickened. From such a combination of reforms life may indeed acquire totally new meaning.

These desirable ends will the more rapidly be attained the sooner common sense is established in the dietary habits, for to imagine that the cure of abdominal troubles can be wrought merely by exercises while the wrong kind of food is projected into the stomach several times a day, or even the right food in the wrong manner, is the negation of common sense. Alimentation, or nourishment, does not consist of what we put into our mouths, it consists only of what is assimilated by the body. Whatever we cannot assimilate is superfluous. Some of it may serve a useful temporary purpose, as roughage does in promoting peristalsis, but it does not become part of ourselves, we are not nourished by it.

Assuming for the moment that the food is well selected and of nourishing quality, what quantity can or should a person assimilate? For adults, the answer obviously is, in normal circumstances, a quantity equivalent to that which has been thrown off since the preceding meal. This means the amount lost through defecation, urination, perspiration, and respiration. It must be borne in mind that three-quarters of the total substance of the body is water. The amount of solid food required is therefore, very roughly, one-quarter of the quantity thrown off. The actual quantity required will of course vary according to the kind and degree of activity, but for practical purposes some approximate idea of the amount by which the body needs to be replenished can be established by calculating how much has probably been thrown off. If between breakfast and lunch all a man has done is drive to his office and work at his desk the amount of bodily tissue thrown off cannot be very great. Let him try to work it out, however roughly, and one-

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quarter of this amount will be the quantity of solid food he should eat at lunch to restore the balance. The probability is that if he has a biscuit and cheese and a glass of milk he will be doing very well. The trouble is of course that so few people try to make any calculation whatever of what their true requirements are likely to be. They live in a slapdash, haphazard, grossly ignorant manner, slaves to habit and imitation of others, and only begin to take an intelligent interest in their condition when something begins to ache.

The great majority of people eat too much, too fast, and too often. And when they do sit up and take notice they bother themselves chiefly about *what* they should eat, overlooking the fact that it is just as important, and sometimes very much more important, to consider *how* one eats. A lot of people attach quite exaggerated significance to diets of one kind or another. They should worry less about the 'what' and more about the 'how', for nourishment is an art as much as a science, just as breathing is. They undermine their own nourishment by scrambling through their meals, just as they undermine their own respiration through hurried shallow breathing. Far more time should be taken in both cases, over each mouthful in the case of eating, over each inhalation in the case of breathing. Time is often said to be nature's great healer, it is also nature's great regulator. It is as foolish to try to hurry nature in her internal operations within us as it would be to try to shorten the hour by bundling it into five minutes.

A healthy stomach can digest almost anything edible on its own terms, one of which is sufficient time for suitable action; it has a marvellous capacity for secreting the precise combination of juices required for the particular mixture of food, but only provided it is not impeded in this action by having another lot forced upon it prematurely.* In a healthy person the stomach

* If given time, a healthy stomach can inure itself even against highly injurious substances if they are introduced at first in very small quantities which are only very gradually increased. Fakirs are known to drink snake venom and other violent poisons for demonstration purposes. The stomach also has an astonishing ability to take protective measures against foreign bodies that have been swallowed intentionally or inadvertently. Many cases are on record of solid objects being retained for long periods. According to a newspaper report some time ago an Italian circus artist, when operated upon, was found to have in his stomach an amazing assort-

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is a receptacle about the size of one's hands placed palm to palm. It lies flat when empty. It hangs very freely suspended in the upper part of the abdomen, slightly on the left side. Its ability to churn food and mix it with the appropriate gastric juices depends on the tone and elasticity of the stomach walls and their freedom of movement. It follows that if the stomach is ever completely filled it is impeded in its action; moreover the free manner in which it hangs suspended causes it to drop when overloaded. For both these reasons it is of great importance that the stomach should never be filled beyond half its capacity. By eating too fast, so that it has insufficient time to cope with each mouthful, it will get completely filled and therefore distended and begin to drop. If this becomes habitual it may eventually get stretched to twice or three times its normal size, in which case it inevitably sags down into the abdomen, pressing other organs out of shape; these in turn are squeezed against other organs so that all are pushed out of position and consequently are hampered in their action. Normally our internal organs are so disposed in the abdominal cavity that each member of the complex family fits into its allotted space exactly, yet not rigidly but with due allowance for the natural movements by which the food is propelled through the twenty-five feet of alimentary tract. If the stomach, the first stopping place on this long journey, is allowed to prolapse, where are the other organs to move except downward and outward, pushing the belly into a flabby pouch, a sight to rejoice the eye of none but the drug manufacturers who make a fortune out of the horrors that take place behind the unsightly protuberance.

The story of abuse generally begins earlier than this with deficient mastication. The chemical transformations effected by insalivation also require time for their operation. The preparatory stage of digestion consists of the mixing of the food with saliva, an operation especially important in respect of starchy foods (bread, cereals, potatoes, beans, rice, and all other carbohydrates) which depend for successful digestion on proper

ment of objects, including a knife and fork, several spoons, a pen-knife, other small articles and a large number of coins. After the operation, when told what had been removed, he was reported to have exclaimed indignantly, 'They've stolen my bank!'

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impregnation with ptyalin, a salivary constituent which transforms the starch in the manner required for its further treatment and absorption. This process takes time. Precisely how much time will vary with the type of foodstuff and the size of the mouthful. Fried foods take longer to insalivate because of their fatty envelope. It is safe to say that in the case of bread, biscuits, cake, rice, potatoes, and other dry cereals about fifty mastications of each mouthful are required provided the mouthful is small and the food is not fried. Big mouthfuls should in any case be avoided. If the food is fried it requires longer to masticate because the process of frying embeds each particle in fat which must first be broken down before the particles of food are exposed. If the starches are soft or semi-liquid they mix quicker and fewer mastications will suffice (always provided the mouthful is small) but even the liquid starches of milk and soups should not be swallowed without proper insalivation. The first rules for sane eating are therefore these: 1. Mouthfuls must be small. 2. A small mouthful of non-fried solid food should be masticated about fifty times. 3. If fried, the food requires longer mastication. When these rules are observed, then with each act of swallowing a small bolus of thoroughly insalivated food drops into the stomach in the condition necessary for the latter to be able to cope with it. And since in this manner of eating the mouthfuls will be widely spaced through prolonged mastication, the stomach also will have time to deal properly with every contribution it receives. The answer to most digestive troubles is simply to eat slowly. The countless popular books on diet rarely underline this sufficiently, for it is difficult to fill a volume with the two words: Eat slowly; so the pages are usually filled up with fancy diets. Truth is much simpler. Barring out-and-out accidents such as ptomaine poisoning, the healthy stomach in every normal person will cope with any food in any quantity provided it is given sufficient time to deal with every morsel of it separately. Time is the essential factor. In other words, simply, *Eat slowly!* Not *food* reform so much as *eating* reform is the principal requirement of this age of crazy rush and hurry.

Yet even this obvious and simple reform may appear revolutionary to many and turn out to be less easy to adopt than

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would at first appear. For the extra time that must be spent at the table must inevitably upset fixed habits and perhaps disturb existing domestic arrangements; but this is offset by the increased nourishment extracted from the food, which will automatically be reduced in quantity, doubly benefiting the health by relieving the burden on the intestines. Another objection one encounters is that it is ridiculous actually to count the number of times one chews each mouthful, one, two, three and so on up to fifty! Why should it be any more strange to count how many times one chews than to study anything else one does? Of course it is impossible *not* to count if one is going to test the matter. Yet many who balk at this small effort at self-knowledge will readily spend long periods and large sums of money at health resorts drinking expensive waters in a desperate attempt to counteract the evil results of not having learnt how to eat in accordance with the requirements of nature. Of course it is necessary to count the number of times one masticates each mouthful, it may be necessary to do this attentively for several days to get thoroughly used to the new way of consuming food. Is this too great a price to pay for improved digestion?

These remarks about eating slowly apply mainly to cereals and all carbohydrates, which constitute a large proportion of any ordinary diet and, as already explained, require a special degree of insalivation for their successful digestion; but the same principle applies to flesh foods, for although in their case the digestive process takes place more in the stomach than in the mouth, the food still needs to be broken up by the teeth, and besides this, meat and fish are often thrust into the mouth together with carbohydrates, so there is nothing to be done but chew the whole lot thoroughly.

Without disciplining one's appetites it is quite impossible to maintain health or recover a figure that has been allowed to degenerate toward obesity. However, if one is sensible about it the picture need not be one of unalloyed gloom and deprivation of the delights of the table. Yoga aims to make life more enjoyable, not less, and the table is one of the most legitimate and should be one of the most regular pleasures of life.

The whole question is, what is to be regarded as enjoyable? If the joys of the table consist in consuming as much as possible

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as fast as possible as often as possible and the devil take the consequences, it is of course futile to talk of Yoga. The sooner the 'enjoyer' of such a mode of life destroys himself with it the better for him and everybody else. But if the conception of joy includes an æsthetic sense it becomes another matter. The chief joy of food should lie in the taste of it. The glutton only half-tastes his food. His habit and satisfaction lie in eating, not tasting. The two things are quite different. Who, to savour a fine wine, would gulp down a tumblerful of it? And just as to enjoy a good wine it must be sipped in small quantities, so also if one desires really to savour food—and is not savour another word for enjoy—it is absolutely necessary to take it in small morsels, tasting every particle of it. This simply cannot be done in a rush, any more than wine can be savoured in a rush. The more respect one has for one's food which in a few hours is to become one's own person, the more deliberately, attentively, and critically one will eat it. The slower one eats it, within reason, the more one will enjoy it; and the more one enjoys it in this manner, the more benefit one will derive from it. For it is a well-known scientific fact that the more enjoyable the food is, the more abundant is the flow of saliva to prepare it for digestion, therefore the better the digestion itself; the food goes on its way rejoicing, and after dinner, instead of a series of bestial eructations, the invocation will surge from the depths of the heart: 'For what we have received may the Lord make us truly thankful'.

There is another important aspect of eating to taste rather than merely to fill the stomach. When one acquires the habit of eating slowly for taste, a sound instinct will announce the moment when the requirements of the organism are satisfied, in other words, when we have had enough. This always happens before the stomach is full. When one makes up one's mind to be on friendly terms with one's body and not attack it with one's food as if it were one's deadliest foe, the body will surely respond by co-operating. Every part of our organism has its own consciousness, and the stomach has a sensitive intelligence of its own. Its patience and ingenuity are unbelievable. For a long time it struggles to adapt itself to the hostile acts of the owner who hurls his food into it as into a dumping ground, it patiently

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submits to the abuse and invents ways and means of compensating for the uninsalivated masses it is expected to deal with; but of course in the end it rebels, and if the abuse is intolerable it gives up. In an extreme case its owner may actually kill it and must accept the consequences, but if he has left any life in it at all then at the first sign of mercy it will respond, and when after a day or two of a new régime it beings to realize that its lord and master is relenting it will co-operate eagerly in the happy work of restoring health to him.

If the reader finds it difficult to grasp that the stomach and all other organs of the body quite literally have their own very real intelligence, an intelligence whose outstanding feature is an abounding goodwill, let him pause to consider the processes of metabolism that are taking place all the time in the body and are the first thing to be studied if one is interested in obeying the injunction, 'Man, know thyself'. Let him recall his recent meal and all its ingredients as they lay on the plate before him. They are now mixed up in the stomach and are about to be sorted out and become through the medium of the blood the constituent elements of the body. Who, or what agency, performs the miraculous process of sorting out? Who decides that this or that part of the food when turned into blood shall become skin, bone, muscle, hair, nails, connective tissue, membrane of one kind or another, eye, ear, intestine, tendon, nerve, or brain? Who, or what, takes the substance of a potato or a glass of milk and transforms it into lung or heart or the self-regulating mechanism of an endocrine gland? What intelligence enables each organ, each cell, to select from the blood just those elements it needs for its own growth and repair and leave the rest? Ponder on the sublime wisdom of that Power which orders these processes of our metabolism, which in our unutterable selfishness and ignorance we all too readily merely take for granted, and it will soon become clear that the least part of our vaunted intelligence is that attached to what we so proudly refer to as our 'personality', our 'I', our ego, our feeling of being 'someone'. In reality this is the dullest and most stupid part of us, it is merely the residue left over after a superior intelligence within us (which naturally enough prefers to exclude our inferior consciousness from its operation) has performed its miraculous

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function of conferring life upon us, preserving it within us today, and providing us with the hope of a tomorrow. Yoga is the process of attuning ourselves to this inward power, wresting from it its hidden secrets, and Hatha Yoga in particular is the process of purifying and refining the only instrument we possess with which to pursue the quest. Only a fool searches outside himself for miracles.

There is a still further weighty reason why food should be eaten slowly and reflectively, extracting the maximum taste and flavour, a reason which should especially appeal to those who attach importance to exploring the occult secrets of living things. Food consists not only of chemicals and water in various combinations, natural food is vibrant also with that vital force—life force—which is inherent in all plant and even in mineral life.* An orange and a potato, for example, are more than the visible and chemically analysable fruit and vegetable that we see and touch. The orange is distilled sunshine, the potato pulsates with the life of the soil from which every atom that composes us is derived. The great Indian scientist, Professor Jagadis Bose, when he was at Oxford, did much to demonstrate vitality in plants, and particularly in vegetable tubers such as potatoes, carrots, and onions. He showed these vegetables to be highly sensitive with the sensitivity of life itself, though this is not perceptible to our crude senses any more than radio waves are felt as they pass through our bodies. The bodily organs that are especially adapted to absorb the radiations from fruits and other products of the soil are the palate and the tongue. On account of the delicacy of the subtle ingredients their contact with these organs must also be delicate and unhurried. Once again the elements of time and taste enter into the proceeding. The tongue and the palate must be allowed the necessary amount of time to extract the more subtle and volatile flavours which are in a very real sense the actual life of the food, its soul, so to speak. If the eater devours his food like a beast, thinking only of how quickly he can get through it and pass his plate for a second helping or dash off to

* It is well known that minerals such as gold, silver, platinum and radium have curative value due to the life force with which they are charged. This fact is also the basis of the talismanic power of precious stones.

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an appointment, all this pranic value—the distillations of that same *Prana* that constitutes the life force of our breath—is lost. However highly placed such an eater may be in social station or professional rank and however refined he may consider himself in literary or artistic ability, if he habitually eats fast, bolting his food whatever it be, his nature is bound to become coarsened as a result.

This is also one of the strongest arguments against heavy consumption of flesh foods. Many reasons are advanced for and against a vegetarian diet, and the feelings of those who hold strong views on the matter on sentimental and humanitarian grounds must be respected, but such criticism is often unscientific. There are, however, cogent scientific reasons for avoiding flesh foods or at least consuming them only in very moderate quantities. Though most animal flesh is easily digested in the stomach, its residue, under the influence of acids, warmth, and darkness, putrifies more rapidly in the intestines than the residue of vegetable foods which take longer to digest. In the long journey from the duodenum to the rectum much damage may be done. But the principal point is that when meat is consumed one is eating that from which the vital force inherent in vegetable life has already been extracted and used up by the animal. Flesh foods are dead in more than one sense. And though valid arguments may be put forward in support of the medical usage of animal products such as liver extract, it would be sheer casuistry to suggest that consumption of animal flesh is therefore equally justifiable on all occasions in unlimited quantities. Protagonists of a meat diet often support their case on the ground that meat provides protein in a form already resembling that of human flesh, an argument which would no doubt give much satisfaction to a scientifically minded cannibal, but the latter might well be justified in asking why those who apply this argument are not sufficiently consistent to join his community. It is a feeble argument, for the protein resemblance is merely a chemical one. All food of every kind is ultimately derived from the soil. Every cell in our body is composed of earth and water that have undergone certain transformations. In this sense every man is directly or indirectly a vegetarian. In deciding between flesh foods and natural food the choice lying before us

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is simple; it is whether to take the produce of the sun and the soil directly from the soil at first hand, or to take it dead, second hand, devitalized through prior animal consumption.

There is a natural aristocracy of foodstuffs, the highest being those derived at first hand from natural sources. Fruits, vegetables, whole cereals, nuts, natural sugar, honey, eggs, and milk with its derivatives belong to this category; they are provided by the vegetable and animal kingdom in a direct, natural, living form. The juice of fruits and leafy vegetables is the purest of all waters, an important point when it is remembered that the body is made up of three parts fluid to one part of solids, so that this should be the proportion of fluid to solids in diet. These foods are what is known as *sattvic*.* In proper proportion they provide not only the full quota of protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and mineral salts required for the healthy maintenance of the human organism, but are permeated also with the highest measure of *Prana*. The vast profusion and variety of these products and their endless combinations obviously suffice for all requirements. Dispute runs high in some quarters as to whether our diet should be confined to such articles. The ardent vegetarian will often maintain not only that

* According to Yoga philosophy nature is governed by three forces or distinguished by three qualities known as the three *gunas*: *rajas*, *tamas*, *sattva*. *Rajas* is the positive quality that induces activity, in extreme forms violence and passion; *tamas* is the negative quality that shuns activity, inducing inertia; *sattva* is the equalizing quality that balances the other two, avoiding extremes; it thus represents in human character poise, self-control, purity, refined taste, moderation, ready adaptability to all circumstances, a serene and equable disposition which remains undisturbed by reverses or irritation. Rajasic foods will therefore be such as excite and stimulate, for example alcohol, tea, coffee and similar stimulants, or strong spices; tamasic foods will include anything that is not fresh, or is badly prepared, impure, or dead; sattvic foods will be those that avoid these defects, are fresh, clean, pure, carefully prepared, derived directly from nature, consumed as nearly as possible in their original form as taken from the soil or living vegetation or specially prepared for human consumption by live, healthy, well-tended and kindly-treated animals. From time immemorial fruit, milk, and fresh eggs have been regarded as the élite of foodstuffs both from the philosophic and nutritional standpoint. The hen's egg is highly nourishing and digestible, containing about six grams of proteins and six of fat and providing energy equivalent to about eighty calories. Digestively, milk is at its best when curdled, either by means of rennet or natural souring, for in this process the same change occurs as has to take place in the stomach in the first stage of digestion, so that curdling is a distinct digestive aid. The whey when separated from the curds contains much of the water, sugar, and albuminous material of the milk and is also very easily digestible.

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such a diet is sufficient but will inveigh against the use of any food whatever provided by animals, so that even eggs and dairy produce may be banned. But the food moralist who proclaims it sinful to eat flesh or even eggs on the ground that this involves destruction of actual or potential life still has to explain why the Deity, whom he usually declares in the same breath we should emulate, ruthlessly permits the slaughter of myriads of innocent and harmless creatures in every heavy rain or hailstorm, not to speak of floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes. There are admirable arguments in favour of vegetarianism in certain latitudes, but morality is not the most convincing of them in an age when western science is approaching ever closer to the ancient Vedic doctrine that all life is One, a teaching which imposes the inescapable corollary that life lives on life. Choice of diet must inevitably be a personal matter which each must decide for himself, for suitable foodstuffs differ all over the world according to climate, season, availability, occupation, age, special circumstances and individual peculiarities and physiological requirements. It is quite impossible to generalize and odious to dogmatize. The people of Tibet, Mongolia, Alaska, Lapland, or Patagonia cannot subsist on the same diet as those who inhabit tropical countries; are they then guilty of immorality in adhering to their staple diet of flesh or fish?*

* Controversy rages in the ranks of fanatical vegetarians about eggs. The point at issue is whether so-called 'vegetarian' eggs, those obtained from hens that have not been impregnated by a cock, are permissible as an article of diet. The controversy is mainly in India, the home of religious oddities. Some consider it permissible to eat such unfertilized eggs but not fertilized ones. The English lady who was for many years a close companion of Mahatma Ghandi and who now desires to be known as Mira Behn recently entered the ranks of disputants (in an article in the *Hindustan Times*) with a view to restoring some measure of common sense into this argument. She described how, when spending some years in Kashmir, she had decided to add eggs to her usual diet during the cold winters and was faced with the problem of whether to keep hens without a cock and thus have 'vegetarian' eggs or to keep them with a cock in the ordinary way. She decided that there was more violence in forcing hens to lead an unnatural life without the congenial society of a cock than to eat eggs that had a latent germ of life in them. Reminding her readers that every day we unavoidably kill insects who are fully conscious beings by treading on them, she continued: 'Surely it is rather absurd to throw up our hands in horror at the thought of eating eggs which have no vestige of conscious life in them (and never would have unless incubated) and in order to satisfy our spiritual "superiority" keep a lot of hens shut up in an enclosure without a cock. . . . A good cock is a model of gallantry and affection toward his ladies. He watches over them, takes them round to the best places for grains, grubs, and grasses, and whenever he

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The true Yogi is never a faddist or fetishmonger in respect of food, whatever his private rules or preferences in the matter may be. The spiritual aspirant who elects or is obliged by circumstances to live in the practical business or professional world instead of the sheltered seclusion of a hermitage often has perforce to accommodate himself to the environment in which he is called upon to fulfil his duties, indeed it is usually part of his spiritual discipline to do so. He may find it inexpedient to have dietetic peculiarities markedly different from those with whom he has to associate. The wisest counsel in the matter is found in the admonitions of the *Bhagavad Gita* regarding moderation and avoidance of extremes and in the similar teachings of the Buddha regarding the excellence of the Middle Way. The Middle Way in any department of life implies compromise and avoidance of extremes. St. Paul also put the same thought into different words when he wrote: 'All things are lawful . . . but all things are not expedient.'* The doctrine of higher expediency is simply the principle of discrimination and selectivity so strongly emphasized by the Lord Krishna.

From the foregoing remarks no doubt the author's personal bias against flesh food may be evident, but vegetarianism is not an article of faith in the philosophy of Yoga, though it may be so individually to many of its practitioners. There are those who, doubtless with good reason, impose a prohibition not only on the consumption of animal flesh but also on other common habits such as smoking or the partaking of alcoholic liquor. Yet there have been great Yogis who practised none of these deprivations. A lady once wrote to me after a meeting at which this subject had been discussed: 'Do you not consider a vegetarian diet *essential* to a spiritual life?' I was obliged to reply that I would not like to subscribe to such a declaration as I had known too many saintly meat eaters and some vegetarians who

finds a titbit he will never gobble it up himself but will call for his hens, and only after they have taken all they want will he help himself. . . . To deprive hens of the society and protection of their natural lord and master, whom they instinctively follow and cluster round, and then say that you are doing it for the sake of non-violence, is one of those many instances of violence in the name of non-violence. Spiritual pride is one of the most dangerous and insidious of enemies and can lead us into the most absurd absurdities. So I sought out a handsome and gentlemanly cock to live with my hens in Kashmir.'

* I Corinthians, VI, 12.

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did not seem to be models of virtue. She wrote back: 'I am sorry that you find it necessary to trample on my susceptibilities, but still I would ask you whether you do not agree that the number of good vegetarians certainly exceeds the number of good non-vegetarians.' I must confess that this letter provoked me to a reply I would have preferred not to make. I wrote: 'I am sorry if you feel I trampled on your susceptibilities. I will not submit any further personal view but only suggest the following for your consideration. I understand you are a member of a Society that holds Jesus Christ to have been a great Prophet and Master. Since he could apparently perform any miracle he desired it is to be supposed that on the occasion when he fed several thousand hungry people he could, had he so wished, have produced for them a vegetarian meal, but the report says that he fed them with fish. Neither did he encourage total abstention from alcoholic liquor if the Biblical account is correct, but when the drink ran short on a certain festive occasion at a place called Cana he furnished enough for the rest of the evening by turning water into wine. May I respectfully suggest that these two instances are worth pondering on by those who adopt a rigid attitude in such matters? Also the opening verses of chapter 14 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans may be worth re-reading. They show that the vegetarian controversy is no modern one.'

I did not hear from the lady again, and although I wrote the letter after due consideration I felt that it was only partly to the point, for historical references are not always relevant. The matter is, as St. Paul so wisely says in the chapter referred to, one which every thinking individual must decide for himself anew in the context of his own life. One of the basic principles of Yoga is not to condemn others for adopting ideas and a line of conduct different from our own. Was it not Jesus also who uttered the caution, 'Judge not that ye be not judged?'

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10

Intestinal Control: (2) Abdominal Exercises

THE person who is frugal and selective in his diet and has acquired the habit of eating slowly has gone far toward avoiding those disorders which are so characteristic of modern civilization, such as dyspepsia, intestinal ulcers, habitual constipation and all its derivatives. From the Yoga point of view, however, this is merely clearing the ground for a complete re-education of the intestinal system. The musculature of the abdominal region must be trained in special ways. It is sometimes thought that the abdominal exercises devised to this end must be so difficult, especially for the obese, that it is useless to embark on them unless one is young and in good health to start with. This idea is quite erroneous. With the one proviso of obeying the correct rules of eating, the simpler of these exercises can themselves be used to work off excess tissue, and once this is achieved the acquisition of the more advanced controls is only a matter of perseverance. This can still be done in one's fifties and sixties. Indeed, the person who learns them in middle age or after passing the half-century mark may sometimes attain more far-reaching results than one who learns them in youth, for the young man or woman, achieving them with comparative ease, can hardly have the same profound appreciation of their value as a person whose very life may have been saved by them. The repentant prodigal son acquired a deeper understanding of the values of home life than his righteous brother who had practised filial piety from his youth up. This is not to belittle or discourage the righteous brother but only to encourage more prodigal sons to mend their ways.

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THE ABDOMINAL SQUEEZE (UDDIYANA)
(FIGS. 14 AND 15)

The first of the exercises for higher training of the abdominal organs is the 'abdominal squeeze', the practice of drawing up the abdominal wall (sometimes referred to in ancient texts as the region of the navel) energetically toward the chest. The Sanskrit term *uddiyana* means 'pulling up'. When correctly performed and if the excess of adipose tissue is not too great the ribs will protrude, for which reason the exercise is sometimes known also as the 'skeleton movement'. This has the effect of squeezing the contents of the upper abdomen upward toward the chest, which helps to rectify any tendency toward prolapse. At the same time the abdomen is pressed back against the spine, thus subjecting the internal organs to a process of massage which squeezes out sluggish blood and allows the quick inflow of a fresh supply. The organs principally affected are the stomach, liver, transverse colon, pancreas, spleen, kidneys, and upper part of the small intestine, but every muscle and nerve in the whole region is also infused with new vitality. The movement can be performed fully only with the breath out, so it requires some proficiency in the breathing exercises to be able to keep the lungs empty for a sufficient time for the pressure to become effective. Beginning with a few seconds the practice can be extended to about half a minute or more. It is easiest done lying down. The pressure should be held steadily, and when released it should be followed by a few deep breaths before being repeated. When the student is accustomed to maintaining the pressure for twenty or thirty seconds he can proceed to vary the exercise by a series of short repetitions of it, each time pulling up the abdominal wall under the ribs in short sharp movements lasting about one second each. The number of such repetitions will be limited only by the student's ability to keep the breath out.

The exercise can also be performed sitting or standing. Those who have to sit much at a desk will find it beneficial to do it quite frequently, since it can be done without rising from the chair.

It is impossible to estimate the far-reaching benefits to be derived from this exercise. The effects extend throughout the

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whole body, the circulation being stimulated and new tone imparted to the tissues. The skin is activated, as is evidenced by the ease with which one perspires from the movement. People with superfluous flesh and flabby musculature will of course not find it easy at first but if they persist they will certainly succeed in the end. Any movement of the abdominal muscles, even the slightest, is better than none at the start, and after a while this basic movement of control of the abdominal region will be found a potent means of restoring the figure.

To regain and preserve one's figure is an ambition every self-respecting human being should entertain. It is an important item of Hatha Yoga since the aim is to restore the body to the condition our Creator intended it to have. A portly lady once came to me for instruction. Knowing my high ideals she said shamefacedly: 'I am afraid you will disapprove of my feelings. I appreciate what I have heard you say about philosophy, but I must confess my chief interest is to slim. I suppose you think this a bad reason for taking up Yoga.'

I replied: 'Madam, can there be a bad reason for doing something good? There is an old adage that begins: "One thing at a time and that done well. . . ." Make it your first duty to recover a Venus-like figure and you may be sure the Deity will look upon you with an approving eye.'

I taught her to breathe rightly and to do 'the skeleton' and other abdominal controls, and later the headstand. After a few months she brought her husband who said to me: 'You have transformed my wife not only physically. At first I tried to dissuade her from coming to you because I regarded this Yoga stuff as hocus-pocus. It is the finest common sense I ever struck and I've come to learn it myself.'

BUTTOCKS BALANCE, 'SCISSORS', AND 'CIRCLES'

To strengthen the abdominal wall and tone up the musculature for the performance of the remaining abdominal controls which are an extension of the practice of *uddiyana*, three exercises known as the buttocks balance, scissors, and circles are recommended.

1. *Buttocks Balance.* Lying flat with hands at the sides, raise the torso and legs slightly off the floor and hold them rigid so that the body, extended as straight as possible, is poised on the

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upper rim of the pelvic bone. The hands are held forwards and the toes pointed. The posture is maintained motionless for a few seconds according to capacity. To release, let go suddenly and allow the body to flop back loose on the floor. This will intensify the ensuing relaxation.

A better method is to balance on a narrow stool a few inches high. For illustration the posture is shown some height from the ground (Fig. 17). Thus performed it is known as the 'cataleptic posture', from its resemblance to a rigid cataleptic condition. The advantage of the stool is that the body can then be held perfectly level which is not possible when the exercise is done on the floor. Throughout the exercise the breath should be held with the lungs half full.

Another version is to raise the legs and grasp the toes with fingers, keeping the knees straight (Fig. 16).

2. *Scissors* (Fig. 18). Lying flat with the hands at the sides, keeping the legs straight with toes pointed, raise the legs an inch or two from the floor. In this position open the legs widely and bring them together again with a movement resembling the opening and closing of scissors. The breath should be held with the lungs half full while the exercise is repeated as many times as is comfortable. To appreciate the benefit of this movement to the abdominal muscles, press with the fingers on the soft wall of the abdomen while the body is relaxed on the ground. Keeping the fingers pressed in, raise the legs as indicated. It will at once be felt that the abdominal wall hardens; it is with these muscles that the exercise is performed.

3. '*Circles*' (Fig. 19). Lying flat with the hands at the sides, raise the straight legs, with toes pointed, about half-way to the vertical. Open them as in the scissors, lower them still opened to an inch or two from the floor (Fig. 18) and bring them together again. Without touching the floor, raise them, and repeat, thus performing circles in the air with the extended legs. The movement can also be done in the reverse direction, opening the legs in the lower position, raising them opened, and bringing them together again in the upper position. This exercise can either be done fairly rapidly, or in slow controlled motion without any alteration in speed during performance. The latter method is the more difficult but also the most beneficial.

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When performed at moderate speed the breathing is as follows. 1. Inhale. 2. Raise the legs, exhaling. 3. On the downward circle, inhale; on the upward circle, exhale. 4. Lowering the legs, inhale. The sequence should be repeated without halt according to capacity.

The remaining abdominal controls are based on the same principle as *uddiyana*, but the pressures and movements are localized. The musculature of the abdominal wall consists of three transverse bands of muscle and two central vertical muscles known as recti. These muscles must be brought under separate control. To achieve this a good deal of concentration is required in most cases, for independent controlled movement of the muscles can only be brought about by willing it. At first, let *any* movement take place, however uncoordinated, with the attention always fixed on the movement it is desired to achieve. Little by little the disorderly movements will come to heel like an unruly horse being broken in.

1. *Rolling and Grinding the Abdomen* (Fig. 20). Using the transverse muscles, roll the abdominal wall up and down with a billowing movement resembling waves. The stomach must deliberately be made to protrude (Fig. 20), and it is the bolus thus formed that must be made to roll up and down. The movement can also be given a sideways twist from right to left, when it is known as grinding, or churning, instead of rolling. Both movements administer a powerful internal massage to the viscera, strengthen the muscles of the abdomen, and stimulate peristalsis.

2. *Isolation of the vertical recti muscles* (*nauli*) (Figs. 21 and 22). By bending slightly forward and supporting the body with the hands placed on the thighs, the two parallel recti muscles in the middle of the abdominal wall can be made to stand out isolated from the sides, which appear to sink in. This should be practised in front of a mirror. Like *uddiyana*, this and the following exercises are possible only when holding the breath out, so can be maintained only for comparatively brief periods at a time.

3. *Repeated isolation of the vertical recti muscles.*

(*a*) By alternating the above isolation of the recti with *uddiyana* a forward and backward movement of the recti is produced. This strengthens the recti muscles.

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(*b*) By allowing the cavities formed at the sides to move forward and backward a flapping movement is imparted to the sides of the abdominal wall, the recti remaining stationary. By this means the ascending and descending sections of the colon are given a special stimulus.

4. *Lateral rolling of the recti muscles* (Fig. 23). When the two recti muscles are made to protrude by isolation from the rest of the abdominal wall (Figs. 21 and 22), each in turn must be made to relax, slightly subsiding, while the other remains taut and protruding (Fig. 23). By making a continuous movement of this alternation a lateral rolling motion is imparted to them, which must be developed in both directions, from right to left and from left to right. This still further strengthens the recti muscles.

5. *Side-to-side thrust of the recti muscles* (Fig. 24). By throwing the isolated recti as far as possible to one side, then to the other, instead of rolling them, and so on back and forth rapidly, a more vigorous movement is imparted to them which acts as a powerful stimulus to all the viscera.

As already observed, the acquisition and regular practice of these controls may have the effect of completely transforming and regenerating the entire digestive and eliminative apparatus. Even the practice of one or two of them can bring about very great improvement. Fifteen minutes devoted to them morning and evening will help to keep the whole abdominal region in a healthy condition. Women should desist from them during periods of menstruation, but will find them of very great benefit at all other times for toning up the whole pelvic region and correcting irregularities.*

* I have known many cases of menstrual irregularities being corrected by the Yoga abdominal exercises judiciously prescribed. A notable example is that of my former pupil and present colleague, Diana FitzGerald, who appears in several of the illustrations. Since becoming an expert instructress herself she has been able to impart the same benefits also to many other sufferers.

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11

Yoga Hygiene

In the last analysis physical health depends on the efficient working of the following four processes: Elimination, alimentation, respiration, and relaxation. These are referred to in esoteric schools as the Sacred Physical Arts. They are sacred because only through their proper training are we able to bring the physical instrument into a condition worthy of the Divine Player within us. Alimentation (or nourishment) and respiration have already been dealt with in earlier chapters. Certain observations remain to be made on the subjects of elimination and relaxation.

Elimination is an important aspect of purification, the first principle of Yoga. Figuratively yet very realistically elimination may be described as casting out devils. The devils that have to be expelled are the impurities that accumulate in the blood, which affect the brain and nerves, consequently the free operation of mind and spirit, and hamper every working of our physical and psychic being.

There are four channels of elimination from the body: the lungs, skin, kidneys, and large bowel or colon. Of these, in the conditions of modern life, the greatest delinquents are the lungs and colon. When lung action is improved, intestinal action usually follows suit, but the bad effects of wrong eating, faulty posture, and lack of suitable exercise are often so deep-seated that additional measures may have to be taken to cope with inadequate colonic functioning. One has only to glance at the number and variety of laxatives and purgatives exhibited in every chemist or advertised in the popular press to see how

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widespread a scourge is constipation in these days of supposedly advanced civilization.

Some nature cure enthusiasts inveigh against any kind of laxative in any form and declare that the colon should be trained to do its work without artificial assistance. Few people will quarrel with this counsel of perfection as an ideal, but it shows some lack of understanding of the matter as applied to a vast number of city dwellers in particular. In many people of middle age, by the time they have woken up to the necessity of seriously taking themselves in hand, certain internal deformities have had time to develop, especially as regards prolapse of the colon and other internal organs and the formation of kinks and twists in the large bowel; or there may be other complications resulting from accident or surgical operation, any of which may affect excretory activities adversely and require special methods of treatment, including some kind of extra assistance to colonic functioning. A more correct way of viewing the matter is to say that all food is or should be laxative, the perfect diet that induces perfect bowel action is *ipso facto* laxative, and if one's diet is not sufficiently laxative one had better change it. The whole question is relative. A substance that is laxative to one may be costive to another. The term artificial in this connexion is out of place. The human body contains traces of every known chemical element; it is inappropriate to apply the term artificial to the expert application of any of them for purposes of health.

It is unwise to dogmatize about subjects so varied as the intricate operations of human physiology, for in the matter of suitable diet for bowel action so much depends on availability of foodstuffs and their preparation, and also on climate, age, occupation, and personal idiosyncrasies. When I was in Chicago a team of Eskimos were appearing in a theatrical show. Nothing that they were given to eat agreed with them and they were rapidly wilting from lack of nourishment. One day they discovered a packet of tallow candles—and their nutritional problems were solved!

There is one method of cleansing the colon which is well suited to the majority of people but which is less often applied than it should be. This is the simple device of washing it out

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periodically with water. Students of Yoga who know how strongly independent bowel action is advocated and how earnestly it is sought are sometimes surprised to find what is called *basti*, the Sanskrit term for a process of simple colonic lavage, prescribed even for the most advanced practitioners of Hatha Yoga. Surely advanced Yogis, they exclaim, must have attained a degree of abdominal control beyond such artifices. But it must be understood that the Yoga conception of purity goes very much further than that commonly accepted by ordinary humanity. There is an old saying that cleanliness is next to godliness. Why 'next'? To the Yogi cleanliness is an inseparable part of godliness, and any man deficient in cleanliness is to that extent deficient in godliness. The cleanliness spoken of is of course not that of the exterior of the body, it is the inner man that must be kept absolutely clean. All food leaves some residue to be expelled. It may sometimes happen that even with the most perfect diet and apparently the most complete evacuation of the bowel some traces of waste matter may remain lodged in the folds of the colonic walls. To the Yogi *no* uncleanness may remain, for in the delicate practices of advanced Yoga even the smallest traces of impurity may affect nervous processes. This is why *basti* is imposed. In ancient times the expert Yogi learnt to draw the water into the bowel by a process of suction or through a small tube made of wood. Nowadays one uses an enema. But the point of interest to the ordinary layman is this, that if even the most advanced Yogis find it advisable to practise this method of washing as a measure of hygiene, how much more necessary it must be to those whose general condition is very far removed from the degree of purification and internal cleanliness achieved by the Yogi.

It is sometimes objected that colonic irrigation or the simple homely enema is unnatural and therefore should be avoided. But this is like the argument about laxatives. It really shows only how primitive the ideas of personal hygiene are in many quarters and further exemplifies how easy it is to misuse such words as natural and unnatural. Is no garden ever to be cultivated because man's intervention in pulling up weeds and planting flowers is an interference with nature and should therefore be branded unnatural? Are soap, mouth washes, nasal

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douches, tooth brushes and other human inventions to be condemned as unnatural? If it is not only permissible but commendable to keep one end of the alimentary tract clean by such 'artificial' means, why not the other end also? Indeed, it should require very little thought to perceive that the other end, by virtue of its function, must require particular hygienic attention, and it is the dirty habit of neglecting this precaution that lies at the bottom of a vast number of diseases. Bowel action is not necessarily perfect simply because it occurs, even though it may be regular. In the kinks and folds of the lower bowel there is every opportunity for scraps of fæcal matter to get stuck and become hardened, so that only a certain proportion actually gets excreted, the rest remaining lodged in the folds. This residue putrifies and its emanations pass through the bowel wall into the blood, their presence being unpleasantly revealed in the smell of the breath and the colour of the skin. A vast number of socially 'respectable' people are unwittingly walking about in this condition. I heard a high Yogi once refer to them as ambulating cesspools. And I might add that the particular persons to whom he was referring were active members of a philosophical society that purports to be interested, among other things, in man's occult potentialities and latent powers.

When our present civilization has advanced a little further in self-knowledge, personal hygiene of the inner man will become a social obligation as well as a necessary condition for the study of one's own inner self, and colonic lavage will be as obligatory as cleaning the teeth. Already the idea has penetrated to the West, where the standard of hygiene of the general populace is on the whole higher than in the East. But the complicated proceeding of colonic irrigation or colonic lavage, performed by professionals, which is becoming a fashion in Western Europe and America, is unnecessary except for invalids. It is adopted of course by those too ignorant, or perhaps for some sound reason unable, to give themselves an enema directly; the situation is somewhat analogous to the use of the tilted plank by medical practitioners and physiotherapists, in order to counteract the ill effects of gravity in the case of those too lazy or for some sound reason unable to learn the headstand or shoulderstand. But the

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simple and elementary practice of taking an enema at home, when correctly performed, is in many ways superior to the complicated process of colonic irrigation. The manner advocated in Yoga for the ordinary person is as follows. To start with, use one quart of lukewarm water slightly below blood temperature. Cold water may be found pleasanter in warm weather and acts as a stimulant; water slightly above blood temperature is useful in counteracting colds, flu, and similar conditions. A pinch of salt or a few grains of permanganate may be added to the water. Hang the bag or can at a height to allow a gentle flow. Use a nozzle of hard rubber, or, if soft, hard enough to be inserted into the anus easily. The most convenient posture must be found by experiment; the choice usually lies between kneeling with the head and shoulders bent forward to the floor, or lying on the left side, or lying on the back. The nozzle is greased with antiseptic jelly and inserted into the anus, and the clip closing the tube is released. The water is thus admitted into the rectum, the flow being controlled either with the clip or by pinching the tube with the finger and thumb. The impulse to let the water out should be resisted by contracting the anal sphincter. The latter is thereby exercised and strengthened. When the rectum is full of water there may be a momentary check due to the water not immediately passing into the sigmoid flexure of the lower bowel. This may be due to an accumulation of fæcal matter of long standing on the walls of the sigmoid flexure. If the water will not pass, it may have to be let out and the first enema restricted to cleaning the rectum. After one or two attempts the opening is likely to loosen up and the water will first trickle and then flow freely into the lower bowel, in which case the whole quart should gradually be let in, and the anal sphincter strongly contracted to contain it. It is then advisable to lie for a few moments on the left side, then the back, then the right side, again the back, and once again the left side before letting the water out. The reason for these changes of position will be clear on studying a chart of the colon; by thus turning over, the water is more easily distributed internally to reach the innermost section, the ascending colon, and then by reversing the order it will flow back to the rectum again. In most people both the splenic and hepatic flexures are hairpin

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bends due to sagging of the transverse section of the colon, and therefore points requiring special attention. The adventurous may make a very thorough job of it by getting into the shoulder-stand or headstand with the water inside and shaking it about upside down. Others can simply shake their abdomen and massage it with the fingers; the water can quite easily be pushed about inside. Anybody who has learnt the elementary abdominal exercises can apply them with great advantage to shake the water up, and then discharge it quickly when it is evacuated. All these practices have a most health-giving and stimulating effect on the bowel, with consequent mental clarification and a degree of physical relief which often astonishes those learning this natural method of internal purification for the first time.

When one quart can be held easily for three or four minutes, the amount can be increased. The colon will hold four quarts, but there is no advantage in putting in this quantity except by way of rare exception deliberately to distend the colon wall for the purpose of toning it up. Two quarts serve the purpose of washing just as well, for this quantity can be thoroughly shaken up inside, so that the water penetrates into every nook and cranny of the convolutions and dislodges the smallest remnants of waste matter. In the conditions of modern city life the transverse colon sags in many people by the age of forty; instead of lying almost level it forms a V-shaped bend down toward the pelvis and various kinks and twists develop which complicate the normal passage of excretory matter. Internal washing becomes an ordinary measure to be applied fairly frequently; and the method of doing it oneself as here described helps to restore vitality to the bowel and gives it a chance to recover at least some of its lost tone.

It is sometimes contended that the irrigation system which requires two tubes to be inserted simultaneously, one for the in-flow the other for the out-flow, is a surer method of reaching the far end of the colon at the ileocæcal valve than an ordinary enema can do, due to the double flow and larger total quantity of water brought into use. This may be true if the ordinary enema is not taken thoroughly. But if it is taken thoroughly and the half-gallon of water retained a few minutes with ener-

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getic shaking up action it is not only just as effective, since the water can be felt in its course through the colon to the cæcum, but the exercise involved, coupled if need be with energetic massage with the fingers along the whole length of the colon, gives it a value unattainable by the more static method; while after evacuation a short second swilling with a small amount of water will provide for the washing out even of the smallest particles that may remain.

THE ART OF FASTING

Fasting is a further effective means of purification. The manner of using this method varies. It can be done on a small scale for a day or two, or for more extended periods; it can be total, with complete abstention from all nourishment but water; or it can be partial, allowing for some light food in the form of fruit or other light nourishment. In the latter case it is not strictly speaking fasting, but a restricted diet. Between this and a prolonged total fast of several weeks there are endless gradations.

A short fast of two or three days requires no preparation, but the break-fast meal at the conclusion should be light. A longer fast requires preparation according to the circumstances. If it is to exceed a week, diet should be gradually reduced during the preceding couple of days, and the fast afterwards broken with a very small quantity of light food slowly partaken, for instance an orange or apple or a glass of milk slowly sipped, this to be repeated after the lapse of an hour or two. The return to full diet must be graded according to the length and degree of the fast.

It is expedient to start fasting with a purge to eliminate the maximum amount of any kind of matter from the intestinal tract which is to be given a rest, and thereafter to take a daily enema. The large bowel usually ceases to function when the normal supply of waste is cut off. Neither the small or large intestine nor the stomach however stop working altogether. Far from it, instead of taking the proffered rest, the entire intestinal canal from mouth to rectum transforms itself voluntarily into an organ of excretion, the quicker to throw off the impurities that have been collecting and contaminating the

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tissues perhaps for years. This remarkable procedure generally starts about the third day and gathers momentum as the organism, using its own intelligence, becomes convinced of its opportunity and energetically strives to rectify the misdeeds of its owner. Every kind of poison and toxin, in a word garbage, from the blood stream and tissues, is poured copiously into the empty stomach and intestines, passing along in the normal way toward the rectum. These substances however are not in solid form, there is no 'roughage' to prompt the normal degree of peristaltic action, but resemble greasy mucus, clammy and malodorous; hence the necessity to aid removal by the daily enema. Hence also the need to imbibe copious quantities of pure water to aid in flushing the organism and expedite the carriage of the waste matter to the intestines by the blood.

The esophagus, throat, mouth and skin all participate in this remarkable self-cleansing process. The skin is an important eliminative organ at all times. It breathes in its own way, excretes poisons through perspiration, and is notably activated by fresh air. During a fast it increases its activity and joins in the general good work of house-cleaning. The faster therefore is liable to become somewhat 'non-social' while he practises this cleansing process, if he is doing the job thoroughly he may be an unpleasant person to have to sit next to. He will do well to seek seclusion for this treatment or else the company of understanding friends who will not complain of his aroma—indeed if they are truly understanding friends they will congratulate him on it!

The purifying effect of drinking water can be enhanced by the addition of lime juice or lemon juice, both of which have the faculty of dissolving calcium and other deposits in the arteries, thus reducing any tendency there may have been toward arteriosclerosis. As a rule, also, plain water acquires a slightly unpleasant taste to the sensitive palate of the faster, and this is counteracted by the pleasant taste of lemon or lime. If instead of fasting totally it is desired to adopt a restricted fruit diet the best fruits to choose are those of the citrus family, lemons, limes, grapefruit, pineapple, or oranges and grapes. Citric and phosphoric acids have the striking effect, through certain chemical transformations, of reducing the acidity of the blood at any

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time, especially when they are taken in the form of the above-mentioned fruits.

If unpleasant effects such as headache, dizziness, or palpitation appear and it is desired to relieve the severity of the fast by some very light nourishment which shall impose the least possible burden on the stomach and so allow it to pursue its purificatory labours unhampered, honey may be added to the citrus drinks or fruit. Honey is absorbed easily and provides the maximum of nourishment with the minimum of digestive strain. This takes the edge off the fast, which is often a wise thing to do if its effects are too hard to bear. Black unsweetened coffee is also helpful. The general house-cleaning is slightly slackened by such concessions, but to compensate for this it is easier to continue the treatment longer.

As was mentioned in the first chapter, the Yogi fasts for the special purpose of achieving certain psychic results arising from the intensive practice of *pranayama* and other exercises during the fast. These methods can only be indicated to the student by a teacher competent to instruct him in these arts, as the precise instructions may differ considerably from pupil to pupil. So nothing more can be said on this subject. But any serious minded person who experiments with fasting for health purposes can enhance the effect and expedite the purificatory process by practising deep breathing, and also light exercise as long as strength lasts. During the first few days of fasting an increase of energy and strength is often felt, due to the fact that the intestines are relieved of the onerous task of digestion, but after a few days inevitably strength begins gradually to wane. Vigorous exercise during the first days therefore will greatly assist the cleansing process, which will also be promoted by massage and hot baths.

The inexperienced faster should however be very careful not to push his first experiments in this field too far. False heroism and folly run hand in hand. Fixed rules for everybody can obviously not be laid down, since so much depends on the condition, personality, age, sex, and circumstances of the experimenter. It is wise to play safe. First attempts should be short, and only gradually lengthened, with considerable intervals in between.

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LUNGS, KIDNEYS, AND SKIN

The lungs and kidneys have been dealt with in detail in studying the exercises of *pranayama* and *asanas*. The condition of the skin depends largely on the efficient working of the lungs, kidneys, and bowel, but the good work of preserving it in a healthy condition can be promoted by massage, washing with cold water which acts as a stimulant, and exposure to the atmosphere. The Yogi prefers the lightest clothing both summer and winter, and some ascetics discipline themselves by sitting naked in the snow even in bitter winds. But the matter of clothing, like that of diet which is a kind of internal clothing, must depend on the student's circumstances and condition and the climate in which he must live. Extreme asceticism has no place in ordinary Yoga practice for everyday life, but it is interesting to know that such hardihood can be cultivated. I have seen hermits sitting daily for several hours in the higher reaches of the river Ganges practising meditation with the icy waters from the melting snows playing about their immobile bodies. Whether their spiritual life is thereby advanced only they can decide.

NASAL HYGIENE

For purposes of cleanliness and health and in order that the breathing shall be unrestricted it is important to keep the nasal passages clear. The simplest way of doing this is by sniffing tepid water up the nostrils. A pinch of salt should be added to half a glass of water, and this can be sniffed either straight from the glass or a saucer or the palm of the hand. Starting gently, the water should at first be allowed only to bubble at the nostrils. In this way only a small quantity will be drawn in and it will be easy to get accustomed to the practice. If it is drawn in too rapidly it may cause discomfort, especially if it gets into the sinuses. As one becomes used to it it can be drawn in more rapidly. The water should pass through the nose into the throat and be ejected through the mouth. This is an excellent protection against colds in cold weather.

The water can also be taken in through the mouth and ejected from the throat through the nostrils.

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A more advanced method, highly beneficial to the mucous membrane of the nasal passages but requiring some skill, is to lubricate a small-sized catheter with antiseptic jelly and pass it up each nostril in turn until the end emerges into the throat. The tip is then seized by two fingers inserted down the throat and the end of the catheter is drawn out through the mouth. When one end is protruding from the mouth and the other from the nose it can be gently drawn to and fro, finally being drawn out through the mouth. This delicate massage keeps the nasal passages in a very healthy condition. The primitive method of performing this operation was with a piece of soft cord, but it is both easier and more effective to use thin rubber tubing.

THE ART OF RELAXATION

The whole of nature is revealed to our senses through contrast and pairs of opposites. Night and day, heat and cold, pleasure and pain, good and ill, life and death—all are opposite sides of one medal, each inconceivable without the other. And like the pendulum whose swing represents the perennial alternation of extremes each side must have its full turn. Activity and repose, labour and rest, tension and relaxation are equally halves of one whole, each impossible without its equal counterpart. Tension and relaxation are as interdependent as light and shade; no light, no shadow; no strain, no release. Just as to understand the shadow we must look to the light, so to understand and control relaxation we must first examine the preceding tension.

Prolonged tension causes fatigue. Fatigue is either healthy or unhealthy, pleasant or unpleasant. Pleasant fatigue we gladly woo voluntarily, as in sport or any other enjoyable exertion; unhealthy fatigue generally overcomes us involuntarily, we become conscious of it only when we fall victims to it. Even healthy and pleasant fatigue will fall into the second category if pushed too far. A characteristic feature of healthy fatigue is that complete and natural relaxation ensues automatically the moment the exertion ceases, whereas this is not so with unhealthy fatigue, rest does not follow easily in its train, it is often difficult to escape from the toils of the involuntary tensions that caused it.

If muscles are tightened without release nerves are impeded

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in their normal function of free communication with the spinal cord and brain. Fatigue poisons are formed in the muscles and bite into the nerves attached. Release of the muscle from time to time is essential to allow the blood to wash away such poisons lest they accumulate and cause pain and damage.

As a rule, unhealthy and involuntary fatigue is brought on not by physical exertion except when this is greatly overdone, but by mental strain, the attachment of the mind to some train of thought by which it becomes obsessed. Such a condition of tortured helplessness can lead to complete exhaustion and serious illness, unrelieved by any normal methods of inducing rest.

All this suggests that if we could but find some means of transforming one kind of fatigue into the other, of changing the character of the fatigue from the unhealthy variety, generally associated with mental strain, into the healthy variety generally arising from voluntary and well-chosen physical exertion, part at least of our problem would find a solution. This is one of the methods by which it is dealt with in Yoga.

When the brain is subjected to unremitting stress the muscles first affected are usually those of the eyes. Eye strain is one of the commonest accompaniments of mind strain. The eyes tend to get hot and tired, the delicate muscles controlling them become taut, affecting their neighbours above and below. Hence the puckered brow, the tense expression of the face, the pressed lips, the clenched teeth, the tightened jaw, each following in inevitable succession unnoticed by the sufferer until too late. Eventually the strain extends further, the unnatural condition spreads until every limb is affected and the whole body is ready to drop with exhaustion.

The best answer to the problem of strain and nervous prostration lies in the prosaic but practical policy of providing for the rainy day before it arrives. The person who thinks of his umbrella only when the storm bursts must not be astonished if he gets wet. All the exercises that have been set out in preceding pages are exercises of foresight as well as cure, they prepare the mind and body to meet new emergencies as well as correct the ill effects of wrong ways of living. All scientific exercise consists of the calculated straining and tensing of muscles followed by

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their relaxation, and if the strain is wisely calculated then the relaxation can safely be left to follow of its own accord.

A study of relaxation begins, like everything else, with the first essential of existence, respiration and the muscular actions involved in it, the rise and fall of the respiratory tide, the expansion and contraction of the muscles of the chest and the diaphragm. Rhythmic breathing is itself a preventive against the unconscious accumulation of wrong tensions and a corrective when they occur. The best exercises in relaxation are the following.

Lie prone with the head propped with a small pillow. A large pillow is liable to raise the shoulders and thus constrict the chest.

If the cause of the trouble is primarily mental strain the attention must first be directed toward the key points: the eyes, the lips, the teeth, and the tongue. The eyes should be closed and turned slightly upward beneath the closed lids, as in sleep. The teeth must not touch, the lips also must be loose, and the tongue must lie freely with the tip just touching the palate.

The feeling now deliberately to be cultivated with every slow inhalation is of the whole body dissolving in an ocean of the life force that is being imbibed. The breath is held a moment, then released, and with every exhalation, resembling a huge sigh of relief, all cares and anxieties should be imagined as flowing out and away like the murky waters of a river escaping into the purifying and limitless expanse of an ocean of peace. Attention to what one is doing will soon cease to demand any effort, the mind simply rests and quietly enjoys.

When the eyes, lips, and face are free, and the currents of peace and repose flow deeply in, the mind travels gently to the extremities of the body, the arms and hands and tips of the fingers, the knees and feet and toes. When these too are free the whole body follows and becomes suffused, floating effortlessly in a sea of tranquil peace. This is the blissful feeling that must be deliberately conjured up by the magic wand of the all-powerful imagination, and held to the exclusion of all cares and anxieties of the outer world.

There is an alternative course which leads to the same result starting from the reverse direction. It is often found to be

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the most effective if the cause of the strain is general physical exhaustion. After two or three deep breaths, let the mind envisage the life force as operating in limited sectors of the body until the whole is brought under its sway. Let it flow first from the feet to the knees with every inhalation, and from the knees back to the feet with each exhalation, three or four times. Then from the knees to the pelvis and back to the knees; similarly from the pelvis to the chest; then to the neck, down the arms to the tips of the fingers, back to the neck, and finally to the very top of the head, so that the whole body is bathed in an ocean of healing force. After a time it will be found that this power can be directed at will to any part of the body.

The over-logical person is liable to undermine this process by demanding an explanation of what this power is. But the secret of success lies not in formulating but accepting it as it is, without question. To define it is to limit it, that is to kill it; it must remain unlimited, boundless, indefinable, inexplicable. The explicable has only limited value, transient interest, the finality of the textbook that will be revised next year, next month, next week. The true is always wondrous. Is anything as inexplicable and miraculous as beauty? Awe, wonder, and worship are the relevant faculties here, not the cramping inhibitions of logic, reason, intellect. One of my hermit friends in the Himalaya mountains had chalked on the creaky plank door of his hovel these words: 'Do not think, accept'. It was the only gateway to an understanding of his chosen mode of existence and of the treasures he had to offer. Yet this ragged anchorite was a distinguished mathematician, and students from the technological institute of a town several miles away used to come to him for instruction in the binomial theorem, differential calculus, and other mathematical abstrusities.

A further method of rapidly breaking up persistent tensions is by consciously and deliberately creating strong counter-tensions controlled by the will. This is the method taught us by nature in the impulse of yawning. In that act nature prompts severe tension both internal and external, internally in the holding of an extra deep breath that stretches the lungs well beyond the normal, and externally in the stretching of the facial muscles by opening the mouth as widely as possible, thus break-

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ing up the tension of the eye and facial muscles, at the same time prompting the impulse to raise the arms and contort them forcefully in all directions with the maximum of strain followed by sudden release. How greatly this procedure is needed by the body is indicated by the fact that when one yawns once like this one generally wants to do it a second and perhaps a third time; indeed the pent-up tensions are sometimes so great that a fit of yawning may overtake a person so that he may have to yawn as many as a dozen times before the requirements of nature are satisfied.

All the earlier stretching exercises can be adapted for the purpose of inducing quick relaxation, but a particularly suitable one is the buttocks balance (page 133). In this case the body drops full length on to the ground in suddenly releasing the tension, so that total relaxation follows naturally. If there is the slightest fear of bumping the head it can be done on a bed or mattress or soft carpet. The point is that the more sudden and complete the release, the quicker and the deeper the ensuing relaxation will be.

Those who have a tendency to be tense 'by nature' as the expression goes, which really means not at all by nature but by sheer bad habit, must constantly be on the lookout against unconsciously allowing lurking tensions to accumulate. A good habit to acquire is that of turning the mind frequently to the key points: eyes, lips, teeth, and the extremities, fingers and toes. The lips should be licked and pursed once or twice, a check made that the teeth are not pressed together, the fingers and toes should be 'twiddled' to remind the owner of their existence as free limbs owned and controlled by him instead of the other way round. If all these are watched with a view to keeping them habitually relaxed there is far less likelihood of lurking tensions developing anywhere else in the body. The rhythmic stretching breaths are also an excellent preventative of fatigue if performed several times a day for about half a minute on each occasion. And in addition to all these suggestions it may be very appropriately be added that the homely injunction 'Keep smiling' has more value in practice than a tome full of theoretical knowledge or pious maxims.

In his Aphorisms the sage Patanjali tells us that one of the

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most effective means of self-mastery in respect of bringing the restless mind under control is to meditate on that aspect of the Godhead termed *Isvara*, the Lord of all Life. I cannot close these pages more aptly than by quoting an invocation to the Lord of all Life which I wrote many years ago at the instruction of my earliest Master. Those interested in reading of the circumstances in which this happened will find the appropriate reference in *The Unending Quest* in the chapter entitled 'The Lord's Prayer'. When proficiency in deep breathing and breath retention is acquired this invocation should be intoned on single breaths, or mentally repeated in the stillness of breath retention, seated in whichever of the *asanas* is found most convenient. Thus practised it will be found not only a further excellent exercise for respiratory control but also for polarizing the mind in the direction indicated so simply yet compellingly by the sage.

> LORD OF LIFE, whose almighty power dwells in the least cell of this body, manifest Thy glory therein to full perfection.
>
> Let those radiant forces that pervade Thy universe purify and uplift me, making weak places strong and every disability vanish.
>
> Through cheerful observance of Thy laws may I acquire divine strength and health, therewith to consecrate myself to Thy service all the rest of my days.

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APPENDIX ONE

The Inspirational Breath

THE word inspiration means 'breathing into', aspiration 'breathing towards'. By 'breathing towards' our highest aspirations—that is, breathing habitually in such a way as to attune ourselves ever closer to that higher plane—we may draw down towards us that 'inspiration from on high' which is the true enlightening of the mind and ennobling of the spirit. The beautiful appeal of the prayer, 'Cleanse thou our hearts and minds by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit', has a very factual meaning, especially when we recall the intimate connexion indicated by Jesus of Holy Spirit with breath in the gospel of St. John to which we have already alluded. This is doubtless the reason why meditation in the deeper, esoteric, sense is always associated with regulation of the breath, a faculty which can only be acquired by practice like any other technique.

In all societies or groups of people who aspire to a deeper understanding of life the subject of meditation occupies a prominent place. Yet few have a clear conception of what it entails. On the one hand it is realized that meditation, to use the term broadly, is a necessary practice for the development of the mind and flowering of the spirit, on the other many of those who seek to practise it are quite unacquainted with its technique and ignorant of its relation to the condition and functioning of the physical organism.

We must distinguish clearly between meditation as commonly practised in such groups, and the higher meditation as prescribed in the original Yoga texts, notably the *Bhagavad Gita*

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and the *Sutras of Patanjali.* Ordinary meditation is sometimes known as Quietism, and may provide much solace to those who are not capable of training the nervous system in the manner laid down in Raja Yoga. Groups of people gather in seclusion, select a topic for thought and reflection, and silently weigh it in their minds to discern its meaning and significance. The purpose of this kind of meditation may be said to be to escape from the disturbing influence of external life and gain a more profound comprehension, within the limits of our ordinary mental and spiritual equipment, of whatever matter is selected for study.

Higher or occult meditation is a totally different process and requires a special training and technique. It seeks to bring all thinking processes to a standstill in order that the light from on high may have unimpeded access and the inspiration of the holy spirit unimpeded entry. Its purpose is to transcend the limits of ordinary consciousness and approach that union with the superconsciousness which is the real aim of all religions as well as of Yoga. In most cases this kind of meditation demands long and careful preparation of the body to achieve a condition of purification that will allow the nervous system to operate on the higher level. It aims at the psychic transformation that is sometimes referred to as 'second birth'.

Even in the lower type of meditation the value of breathing slowly and deeply is often appreciated, though it is usually performed in a haphazard untrained manner. The adherents of religious and philosophic societies are often just as deficient in knowledge of themselves as the man in the street outside. I have known many who for years had attended schools or courses of various kinds of 'cosmic wisdom' or 'occult knowledge' who were still utterly ignorant of their nervous system and its functioning.

The special breathing exercise here referred to as the inspirational breath may be of immense help to those desirous of a less superficial approach. It has the advantage that it can be practised by anybody in reasonably fit physical condition and indeed is itself of great benefit to the health, improving both respiration and digestion. It requires no prior training other than the proper method of deep breathing as indicated in

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Chapter Five, and leads naturally into that state of deep internal peace which is the gateway to higher meditation.

In its physical action the inspirational breath is an extension of the simple overhead stretch described in Chapter Five. The most convenient posture suitable to all is the Egyptian, seated with spine erect on a chair of such a height that the torso and thighs and the thighs and lower legs form right angles, with the hands resting lightly on the knees. Cross-legged or seated on the heels are equally suitable postures if preferred.

The exercise then starts as in the stretching breaths, that is, inhaling slowly and deeply, at the same time raising the arms, fully extended and with fingers outstretched, sideward behind the line of the shoulders. The hands may then be extended overhead in an invocatory gesture, with the eyes looking upward; or they may be clasped as in Figs. 6, 7, 8. The advantage of the clasped hands turned upward is that this helps to fix the posture and increase the upward stretch.* The stretching may be gentle at first and later gradually increased. Hold the breath in this posture as long as is comfortable, always bearing in mind that the longer it can be held with the body immobile, the better. To exhale, unclasp the hands and bring the arms slowly down behind the line of the shoulders, fully extended with the fingers outstretched, relaxing as they near the end of the descent. The head returns to its natural position at rest. The hands return to their resting position on the knees. Two or three intermediate deep breaths are now taken, sitting still with the eyes closed, before repeating the exercise in this preliminary form.

The student must further learn to draw in the abdominal wall when the arms are raised overhead (Fig. 6). In philosophic terminology the abdominal wall is often referred to as the region of the navel, and is sometimes prescribed as a centre for meditation. The action consists in drawing the abdomen inward and

* It must be remembered that gravitation is not only a physical but also a psychic force. Habit, the tendency to repeat any course of thought or action, is a manifestation of gravitation on the psychic plane. The stretching upward of the arms and the drawing-in of the abdomen have a psychic as well as physical effect. Aspiration is always anti-gravitational, its direction is heavenwards. It also may be made a habit, but only by unremitting effort and attention; with the slightest relapse the spirit tends to fall earthwards again.

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upward as if to lift it toward the chest. This is a similar movement to that of *uddiyana* (abdominal squeeze) described in Chapter Ten, but it is here performed with the breath held in. With the lungs full the drawing up movement can only be slight, but even a slight retraction of the abdominal wall will increase the general feeling of uplift. The retracted position of the abdomen must be held throughout the retention of the breath. It will be relaxed when exhalation commences.

When the exercise in this form can be done with pleasure and comfort the first steps may be taken toward turning it into an exercise for mental concentration. At the point when immobility in the overhead stretched position is reached the eyes should be shut and attention focused beneath the closed lids at the point midway between the eyebrows (the *ajna chakra*). It is not necessary to squint. The eyes should simply be turned slightly upward under the closed lids, as is usual in sleep, and the attention mentally concentrated at the middle of the forehead. This is the practice often enjoined in the sacred scriptures for fixing the mind at the so-called 'third eye', the eye of inner revelation. With the attention thus focused the body is held immobile for the period of the breath retention. Thought should first be deliberately directed to a mental review of what one is doing, so as to have a clear picture of it and make sure that every detail is accurate. This being ensured, the mind may turn inwards and enjoy the sensation of refreshment and peace engendered by the immobility of the breath retention.

The student should now be ready for the final important addition, the control of the exhalation through incantation of the sacred sound OM. This has also to be practised separately at first until one is accustomed to it and can achieve a satisfactory intonation.

A vast literature exists dealing with the sacred sound OM or AUM. It is examined in a work by Sir John Woodroffe entitled *The Garland of Letters*, which treats of the mantric significance of the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. The *Upanishads* abound with references to OM which are not always easy to interpret. The Mandukya Upanishad opens with this verse: 'OM is the imperishable Word. OM is the universe, and this is the exposition of OM. The past, present and future, all that was,

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all that is, and all that will be is OM. Likewise all else that may exist beyond the bounds of Time, that too is OM' (Sri Aurobindo translation). Or again in the *Katha Upanishad* (II : 15, 16): 'The goal that all the Vedas glorify . . . for the desire of which men practise holy living, of That I will tell thee in brief compass. That goal is OM. For this Syllable is Brahman, this Syllable is the Most High: this Syllable if one knows, whatsoever one shall desire, it is his.' (*ibid.*) OM should not be regarded as a word in the ordinary sense, but as a sound, the primaeval note of creation, of which the audible sound OM, when correctly intoned, is a distant reflection within the range of human hearing. It is the *logos* of the Greeks, translated for want of any other term as 'the Word' in the opening verses of St. John's gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' The obvious resemblance of these verses to those of the Mandukya Upanishad suggests strongly that the writer of the fourth gospel was acquainted with the Upanishads, or in any case inspired by the same teaching. From the time of Heraclitus onward Greek metaphysics was dominated by the doctrine of the logos or 'word', which the author of the fourth gospel was much concerned to apply also to Jesus as being an incarnation of this principle. The logos was conceived of as the ultimate, absolute, creative will and intelligence that underlies and informs the universe and all things in it, that is, the Deity. In the terminology of the Upanishad, 'OM is the universe and the universe is the exposition of OM'. In India, the traditional home of Vedic teaching, the sound OM has degenerated (except for a small minority who understand it) into commonplace use as a formal introductory and terminal formula with which to open and close verbal prayer, much as the word 'amen' is used in Christian worship. But to treat OM as a mere exclamation or formula deprives it of meaning. It is, strictly speaking, a religio-scientific term belonging to higher physics, for it is an expression of vibration; the nearest we can get to any definition of it is to say that, when correctly intoned, it is to the human ear a musical echo of the primal sound produced by the first vibration in the

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cosmos when creation emerged from chaos. Such a statement is obviously grossly inadequate because no definition, description, or verbal interpretation can possibly be adequate, yet for want of means of expression we are forced to fall back on such expedients. To continue with such expedients, OM, as an expression of the self-creating First Principle from which all things derive, is our Father and we—and all things—are His Children. Or, to revert to the expedient of the translators of St. John, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'.

No amount of mere analysis or intellectual examination of OM will ever produce anything more than speculation, a barren product. Even the earliest inklings of a true understanding of OM can be gleaned only through its effect when sensed psychically by long-repeated long drawn-out intonation.

Few, whether in India or elsewhere, are initiated into this mystery or have the requisite ability and patience, on a background of total denial of all worldly values, to practise it over long periods in the manner prescribed by those *gurus* who are qualified to impart it. Nevertheless this devotional study is not without hope even for the most ordinary individual, granted his attitude of heart is right. For, like all else in the manifested universe, this too is relative. It is easiest spoken of in terms of vibration. This subject was touched upon in Chapter Eleven. Strings tuned in unison vibrate in sympathetic resonance even when the tuning is only approximate, though of course the more perfect the unison the stronger will be the response. The same law applies to octave tuning. Through sympathetic resonance we can place ourselves in actual vibrational contact with every hidden power in creation; expressed in musical terms this becomes less incredible when it is remembered that we have not only tonic notes and octaves but also the whole array of overtones or harmonics to operate with. This is the basis of Mantra Yoga, the Yoga of sound or vibration. It is the principle underlying religious incantation and the intoning of prayer in religious worship, but that art has been completely lost in the West, except to some extent in the Greek Orthodox Church where priests are still trained as vocalists and where organ support (or more correctly, interference) is banned. The

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senseless, gloomy and often dirge-like drawl of intoned prayers in western churches is a debased relic of what was once a scientific religious principle.

The student of the inspirational breath must have practised deep breathing and retention of the breath as laid down in Chapter Five sufficiently to be able to hold his breath comfortably for twenty or thirty seconds at least. He should then experiment with the production of the vocal sound OM chanted on a single note. For the purpose of the present exercise it will be close enough if the sound is produced as the word 'home' without the aspirate. He should practise chanting this sound on any note that comes conveniently to him, experimenting with tone, pitch, and volume to find a note he can conveniently sustain and regularly repeat. High notes should be avoided. Low notes produce deeper vibration throughout the body. It is generally found that a note somewhat below the middle range of one's singing voice is most effective. Once started, the sound must continue on each exhalation without wavering or alteration of pitch until the breath is exhausted. The longer the sound is sustained the more effective it will be. Beginning with the open 'o' sound, the lips gradually close, and the last part of the intonation is hummed, trailing off into inaudibility. This method of exhalation is then applied to the exercise as so far described, the slow descent of the arms being timed to finish as the sound ends.*

When the student is thoroughly at home with this practice, even though he may feel that his intonation is still far from perfect, he will find that, if only he can make it even and unwavering, it will very greatly intensify the calming effect of the exercise and help to bring the mind into a state of unruffled tranquillity. Even practised separately it is a valuable respiratory exercise, but when added to the stretching exercise it has the effect, when correctly performed, of fixing the quiet concentration brought about by focusing the attention between the eyebrows.

* In expert practice of this incantation certain variations of pitch and volume are sometimes introduced but this is a subtlety which cannot be gone into here and is immaterial to the exercise as described. For the metaphysical interpretation of this sound and the significance of the constituent letters A-U-M the reader is referred to *The Garland of Letters* by Sir John Woodroffe.

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With the mind resting in this state of calm, a sufficient number of deep breaths without arm movements or breath retention and with eyes still closed are then taken to recover the normal rate of deep breathing. If the exercise has been accurately timed, it should be found that the impulse to take the first recovery breath follows immediately on completing the chanting. The recovery breaths are necessarily performed rather more quickly than the exercise of slow deep breathing, and each of them should resemble a deep heaving sigh of quiet joy and relief. Three or four are usually sufficient to bring the breath back to a condition of readiness to repeat the whole exercise.

Success depends on the meticulous observance of these instructions. The exercise can safely be repeated any number of times, and as often as one likes. It goes without saying that it must be done without haste, and the student must have plenty of time at his disposal. When it has become easy and natural the moments of silent immobility during breath retention can be used to deepen the calmness of mind which is so valuable a preparation for that true meditation when thought comes to a standstill and the soul becomes suffused with peace. When such concentration is successful the feeling afterwards is one of having been very far away for a very long time in some utterly unknown but surpassingly restful place, even though the actual period measured in ordinary time may have been but a few seconds.

The moments of breath retention may also be used to fix the mind on any mantram or subject of one's choice and let this thought sink deeply into the consciousness. The serious seeker who is willing to experiment patiently will discover for himself the manner in which this exercise can be used to greatest advantage for his mental and spiritual development. Some succeed quickly, with others it takes a longer time, depending on their physical condition at the start and the sincerity and resolve with which they pursue the quest. Sluggish bowel action or excess of flesh through self-indulgence may be serious handicaps. It is surprising how many who somewhat self-righteously presume to despise the body have no compunction at all about collecting a superfluous quantity of it! 'Create in me a clean

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heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me', sang the psalmist.* A clean heart can only be one nourished by clean blood, which means that how and what we eat and drink and how we evacuate the bowel have much to do with the spiritual life; and as for right spirit, the renewal of this in full measure with every inhalation is one of the first requirements of Yoga. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.'† Once again the psalmist stresses the basic Yoga principle of purification. The student who makes use of the inspirational breath might do well to choose these mantrams for meditation.

These truths are secret to each one, because only he who practises patiently and persistently in solitude—that is, in secret—will discover their truth. Otherwise the whole subject remains mere theory and speculation, a topic of verbal disputation or prejudiced dismissal by the ignorant. Only he who does, knows. Our relationship to our Father in Heaven can only be a personal and secret one, experienced in the heart and soul of each separately. The earnest seeker, paying not only lip service to the dictum 'Know thyself', but casting all mere learning aside in order to get down to factual exploration of the secrets of his own being, may well add also this further significant utterance of the Psalmist to his list of meditational mantrams:‡ 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.'

* Psalm LI, 10.
† Psalm XXIV, 3.
‡ Psalm XCI, 1.

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APPENDIX TWO

Scheme of Practice of Exercises

It is obviously impossible to establish a programme of practice that will be equally suited to all regardless of age, sex, build, occupation, climatic conditions, state of health on starting, time at disposal, and other individual particularities that always have to be taken into account. Any attempt to establish such a scheme of practice would inevitably be misleading to many. Certain exercises are always less suited to some than to others, a distinction that can only be discovered by experiment and observation. Persons who have undergone surgical operations for instance may require special consideration. In general, however, the following suggestions may serve for guidance, to be adopted or adapted by the student according to his or her case.

Respiratory and abdominal control, conducing to improved lung and bowel action, are the foundation of all Yoga. Beginners should regard the following exercises as basic for keeping the body in health and rendering it supple:

1. Deep rhythmic breathing (Chapter Five).
2. Cleansing breath (Chapter Five).
3. The Stretching Breaths in the order indicated (Chapter Five).
4. Abdominal 'Squeeze' (Chapter Ten).
5. Armswing and Sideslip (Chapter Seven).
6. Rolling on the spine (Chapter Six).

If these are done gently and the degree of effort and number of repetitions increased gradually, difficulties will be avoided even in the most delicate cases.

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A moderate degree of performance of such a programme should take about thirty minutes, allowing for periods of relaxation.

Those to whom these offer no difficulties can proceed to greater efforts. The buttocks balance, 'scissors', and 'circles' (Chapter Ten) are further exercises to strengthen the abdominal muscles, more strenuous than the 'squeeze'. The remaining abdominal controls, involving isolation and manipulation separately of the recti and transverse muscles of the abdominal wall, are advanced exercises requiring considerable concentration.

Of the *asanas*, other than the seated postures, the shoulder-stand is a natural development of rolling on the spine (Chapter Six), while the preparations for the headstand (Chapter Six) are a valuable means of strengthening the neck and back, regardless of whether the complete headstand is achieved or not.

These are the simplest and usually among the easiest postures if correctly approached. The remaining *asanas* described in Chapters Seven and Eight should be added only as proficiency grows.

Though the *asanas* have definite value for special purposes, they should be regarded as an adjunct rather than the main practice of Hatha Yoga. To imagine that a person is advanced in Yoga merely because he can stand on his head or twist his body like a circus contortionist is the height of absurdity. Many great Yogis never do any *asanas* at all other than the seated postures, while on the other hand thousands of acrobats and contortionists can tie their bodies up in unbelievable knots and contortions yet have never taken and are perhaps incapable of ever taking even the first step in true Yoga. This is not to deprecate the *asanas*, they are extraordinary inventions and are peculiar to the Yoga system, but they must be viewed in their correct perspective. If salvation depended on the ability to stand on one's head or twist one's body like an eel, paradise would indeed be strangely populated! It is not in the mere gymnastic element that the principal value of the *asanas* lies; beyond the physiological advantages there are mental and psychic (that is, spiritual) correlatives of the physical practice which are of much greater importance. The manner in which the physiological modifications can be used to affect mental

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and psychic development is the most important part of the matter. Any instructor who merely teaches postures—and there are many such instructors—is not really a teacher of Yoga at all even if he combines the postures with breath training as any sensible physical training instructor would do.

People are very differently affected by the exercises and postures. The old adage that one man's food is another man's poison applies here as in other fields. This is a further reason why no fixed programme for everybody can possibly be proposed. I had for example one student who found that prolonged repetition of the ordinary cleansing breath early in the morning had a specially vitalizing effect upon him. During a period of great business stress when he was compelled to curtail his hours of sleep he found that by exceeding the usual number of cleansing breaths at his morning practice, pushing the repetitions up to eighty and even a hundred at a time, and performing the exercise standing (which increases its strenuousness), and doing this several times over, alternating with stretching exercises with held breath, he was able so to vitalize his whole organism in half an hour that he easily faced the daily strain of fourteen or fifteen hours during which he had little opportunity to sit down even to eat. I mention this case not to suggest that others should imitate it but to show how, by approaching the study of the subject in the proper spirit of inquiry and adventure, we may all make discoveries about ourselves that may astonish us. Adventure, however, should always be tempered with prudence. We are unknown territory to our own selves.

In most cases a better method of staving off fatigue than the above is to do certain simple movements at frequent intervals throughout the day for short periods of about half a minute at any odd moment when the opportunity presents itself. The simplest of these is to take a deep breath and hold it as long as possible, straightening the body. This can be done with hardly any interruption of work except when dictating or conducting a conversation. The following are also very suitable for this purpose whenever a few seconds are available:

1. The vertical stretch (Chapter Five).

2. Rotating the shoulders while holding a deep breath for a few seconds.

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3. The abdominal squeeze and a few movements of the abdomen, particularly the rolling of the abdominal wall (Chapter Ten). Some find they can even do this mildly without interrupting work at all.

4. A few twists and rotations of the neck while holding a deep breath.

5. Take a deep breath and hold it, raise and extend the legs horizontally beneath the desk, sit bolt upright with closed eyes and remain rigid with shoulders pressed back as long as a deep breath can comfortably be held, followed by a few deep breaths while relaxing.

6. A few cleansing breaths followed by retention for a few seconds with closed eyes.

None of the above should take more than half a minute or so. They can be done without rising from the desk, but they must be repeated at frequent intervals, whenever occasion offers. This helps greatly to keep the mind fresh throughout the day. The observant student will discover many movements combined with rhythmic breathing or retention of the breath that he can perform in the same manner with similar effect. For those able to do it the pillars backbend on a chair (Fig. 57) is recommended for anybody who has to work bending over a desk or typewriter.

As regards the best time of day for full practice, it is not possible to generalize. Some find the early morning best, others the late afternoon before the evening meal. It is a matter which each must decide according to circumstances. But it should never be soon after eating. Two hours should usually elapse. However, if the student obeys the important injunction to eat all food slowly, thus allowing digestion and assimilation to take place with greater freedom, it will be safe for him to practise much sooner than two hours after eating if he finds it convenient to do so.

For those whose time is very limited a regular rotation of a selection of exercises, changing the selection daily, is preferable to trying to scramble through the whole lot quickly. As a rule Yoga exercises should be done slowly and deliberately. Speaking very generally, those exercises which a person likes best will be those that most benefit him, but there are exceptions to

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this rule. The abdominal grind (Chapter Ten), for instance, is a highly beneficial movement, but some people shirk it because it may not come easily at the first attempts. They should keep at it until they acquire proficiency.

Ladies must of course use discretion with regard to exercising during menstruation. In most cases it is best to continue the exercises gently.

It should never be forgotten that the aim of Yoga is to establish a state of equilibrium between body and mind so that they shall work together in harmony. In actual practice it is remarkable how the system serves to benefit even the most contrasted cases when wisely and selectively applied; wrongly applied, of course, it must needs lead, like anything else, to negative results. A famous artist was once asked how he selected and mixed his paints. He replied, 'With common sense'. Let the Yoga student select and mix his exercises similarly.

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INDEX

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INDEX

Abdominal exercises, 52, 60, 131–6, 155–6; in colonic lavage, 142; effect of, 118; in meditation, 155–6; obeisances as, 66–7
Abdominal grind, 135, 166
Abdominal muscles: in breathing, 75, 88; training of, 131–6
Abdominal organs: control of, 64, 65, 68, 131–6, 163, 165; and thinking qualities, 48–9, 64
Abdominal squeeze (*uddiyana*), 88*n.*, 94, 99, 132–3, 156, 162, 163, 165
Abdominal uplift, 155–6
Acharya (teacher), 24
Ajna chakra, 34, 77*n.*, 156
Akasha, 31
Alimentation—*see* Eating; Food
Alternate ('sun and moon') breathing, 62, 73, 83–6
Among the Great (D. K. Roy), 60*n.*
Anahata chakra, 34
Andrade, Professor E. N. C., 14
Animation, suspended, 71*n.*
Ardha-matsyendrasana (spinal twist), 105–6
Armswing, 102, 162
Arnold, Sir Edwin, 25*n.*
Asanas (postures), 37, 52, 82; armswing preparation, 102; bending, 106–16; distorted ideas of, 55–61; exhibitionism in, 58–9; modes of, 88–116; pronunciation of name, 88*n.*; seated, 88–90; twisting, 101–6; value of, 163–4
Asceticism, 146
Ashrams (schools), 3, 10; combination of physical and philosophical, 54–5
Aspiration, 155*n.*
Asvatta tree, symbolizing brain, 32
Atman, 31
Austerity, 41; saintliness and, 66–7

Back, rolling on, 90–1, 162, 163
Backward stretch, 81
Basti (colonic lavage), 139
Behn, Mira, 128*n.*
'Bellows breathing', 72, 76–8
Berdyaev, Nicolai, 5
Besant, Annie, 6, 35*n.*
Bhagavad Gita, 14, 25, 129, 153
Bhajan (worship), 24, 25
Bhakta Yoga, 13–14, 23–5, 27, 55*n.*
Bhastrika ('bellows breath'), 76–8, 86
Bhujangasana (cobra posture), 113–14
Blake, William, 23
Blavatsky, Helen P., 5, 6
Body: aim to rise above, 56; culture of mind and, 61; disciplining of, 37, 51–2, 56; health of not dependent on muscular strength, 51*n.*, 83; hypocritical attitude to, 61; the only physical instrument, 28, 52; suppleness of, and youthfulness, 82–3, 88, 101; 'temple of the Holy Ghost', 68; trinity with mind and spirit, 89*n.*; vibration of, 94, 99
Bose, Professor Jagadis, 125
Bow posture (*dhanurasana*), 114
Bowel action, 114, 116, 138–43, 160–1
Brahma, 31, 89*n.*
Brahman (God), 4, 31, 36, 43, 157
Brain: *asvatta* tree symbolizes, 32; moon and, 48

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Breath retention, 71–2, 75–6, 84–6, 165; and mental concentration, 77–8, 149, 152, 156, 160
Breathing: art of, 69–86; chanting of orisons and, 66–7, 69; exercises (*pranayama*), 9, 50, 52, 60, 74–86, 153–61; five principles of, 71–3; inspirational, 153–61; in meditation, 154–61; moods and, 49; rhythmic, 71, 83, 149, 151, 162, 165; spiritual function, 64–5
Bronchial passages, cleansing of, 72, 76–9
Buddha, 12, 27, 43, 56, 68, 129
Bull posture, 101–2, 104–5
Buttocks balance, 133–4, 151, 163

Carpenter, Edward, 23
Chakras (seven psychological centres), 34–7, 40
Chakrasana (wheel posture), 115
Character, background of, 41, 53–4
Christ, 12, 14, 43; and Holy Spirit as life force, 65, 67, 153; miracles, 130; on prayer and fasting, 8, 41, 64; and self-abnegation, 36; and serpent as symbol of wisdom, 32
'Circles' exercise, 134–5, 163
Cleanliness, internal, 138–43, 144
Cleansing breath, 72, 76–9, 86, 162, 164, 165; with movements, 78–9, 91, 99
Cobra posture (*bhujangasana*), 113–14
Colon: cleansing of, 137–43; pressure on, in peacock posture, 116; remedial massage for, 103, 114, 143
Concentration, 37, 41; inspirational breath and, 156–60; retention of breath and, 72, 77–8
Consciousness, 23; higher meditation transcends, 154; study of, in Raja Yoga, 15; in terms of vibration, 42–3
Contemplation (*samadhi*), 41
Contortionist feats, 90*n.*, 163
Coué, Emile, 7*n.*
Creation, aspect of Reality, 31, 89*n.*
Cross-legged posture (*sukasana*), 89, 155

Deep breathing, 71, 74–5, 86, 149, 151, 162, 164–5
Deities, 27, 31–2, 157
Destruction (or Transformation), aspect of Reality, 31, 89*n.*
Devotion (*Bhakta*), Yoga of, 13–14, 23–5, 27
Dhanurasana (bow posture), 114
Discrimination, 34
Disease-resistance, 50, 51*n.*
Divinity, attainment through purification, 51
Drugs, 41
Dukes, Lady (Mrs Diana FitzGerald), 100*n.*, 136*n.*

Eating, art of, 63–4, 117–30, 165
Eckhart, Meister, 23, 27, 43
Eggs, 127 and *n.*, 128*n.*
Egyptian posture, 76, 79, 89–90, 155
Electricity, 32, 49
Elimination, 137–47
Endurance, 51*n.*
Enemas, 139, 140–3; during fasting, 143–4
Energy: economy of, in *Karma*, 26; study of, in Laya, 27
Ethical training, 41, 53–4
Eye strain, and mental strain, 148
Existence-non-existence (*sat-asat*), 27–8

Fakirs, 40, 56, 119*n.*
Fall of man, symbolism of, 32–3, 34, 35
Fasting, 51*n.*; basic reason of, 8–9, 145; and prayer, 6–8, 41, 64; purification, a means of, 143–5
Fatigue, 72–3, 147–8, 164
Fish posture (*matsyasana*), 116
FitzGerald, Mrs Diana. *See* Dukes, Lady

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Flesh foods, bias against, 126–30
Food: and dieting, 127–8, 144–5; flesh foods, argument against, 122, 126–30; life force in, 63, 125–6; quantity required, 118–19; *sattvic*, 127; taste of, 123
Forward bend (*paschimottanasana*), 108
Forward stretch, 81
Francis of Assisi, St., 23
Fruit, 127 and *n.*, 144–5

Garbhasana (tortoise posture), 109
Garland of Letters, The (Woodroffe), 156, 159*n.*
Gasping, 72
Generosity, 53
Geometry, 22
God, 4, 8; as Love, 23–4; names for, 31, 43; reunion with, 36, 43; and the Word, 157
Gravitation, 155*n.*
Gravity, influence on internal organs, 92
Greek Orthodox Church, 158
Greeks: and culture of mind and body, 61; and *logos*, 157
Gunas (qualities of nature), 127*n.*
Gurdjieff, 5
Gurus (teachers), 3, 6, 10, 24, 37, 39–40, 41–2, 51, 52

Haitch, Elisabeth, 57*n.*
Halasana (plough posture), 108–9
Half-lotus posture (*siddhasana*), 89
Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika, 15*n.*, 51*n.*
Headstand, 52, 66, 88*n.*, 94–100, 163
Heels, sitting on (*vajrasana*), 89, 95, 163
Heraclitus, 12, 61, 157
Heredity, and super-normal powers, 41
Hindus, 31
Holy Spirit; and *prana*, 65, 67, 153; trinity with Father and Son, 32, 89*n.*
Honesty, 53
How to Know God (Isherwood and Prabhavananda), 15*n.*
Humility, 53

Ida (negative of *prana*), 33, 49; the 'moon breath', 49, 84
Identity, 15, 17–21
Illusion, 20–2, 36
Incantation, 27, 41, 52; as breathing exercise, 66–7, 69; of OM, 156–8
Individuality, 15, 17–21
Inertia (*rajas*), 89*n.*, 127*n.*
Inner Life, The (Leadbeater), 35
Inner vision, 77*n.*
Insalivation, 120–1
Intelligence, serpent as symbol of, 32
Isherwood, Christopher, 15*n.*
Isvara (Lord of All Life), 152
Iyangar, Srinivasa, 15*n.*, 51*n.*

Jameson, Storm, 17*n.*
Japa (repetition), 7*n.*
Jivatman (soul), 43
Jnana Yoga, 13–23, 27; and 'I-ness', 17–21; and illusion, 20–2; intellectual path, 14–15, 23; and pain, 21; Raja Yoga, alliance with, 15; and space-time problem, 16–21

Karma Yoga, 13–14, 25–6, 27
Katha Upanishad, 157
Kidneys, remedial massage for, 103, 106, 114, 116
Kipling, Rudyard, 54
Kirtan (song), 24
Knee-bend stretch, 81
Knowledge (*Jnana*), Yoga of, 13–23, 27
Krishna, 12, 14, 129
Kundalini ('the serpent power'), 29–43, 85; and divine and hidden powers, 34–42; and electricity, 32; and fall of man, 32–6; journey and goal of, 36–43; origin of name, 30, 32–6; Ultimate Reality in, 31

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Lateral stretch, 80–1
Laxatives, 138, 139
Laya Yoga, 27
Leadbeater, C. W., 35, 68*n.*
Life, expectation of, 58
Life Force, 149, 150; in food, 125. *See also Prana*
Locust posture (*salabhasana*), 115
Logos (Word), doctrine of, 157–8
Lotus posture (*padmasana*), 56, 59, 88*n.*, 89, 109
Love, God as, 23–4
'Lunatic', 48, 50
Lung power, full habitual use of, 71, 74–5, 86, 149, 151, 162, 164–5
Lungs, cleansing of, 72, 76–9, 86

'Maltese Cross' exercise, 109–13
Mandukya Upanishad, 156–7
Manipura chakra, 34
Mantra Yoga, 27, 41, 67, 69, 158
Mastication, 120–2
Mathematics, 22–3
Matsyasana (fish posture), 116
Maya (illusion), 20–1, 36
Mayurasana (peacock posture), 115–16
Meditation, 8, 14, 23, 27–8, 41; breathing technique, 154–61; classic posture for, 89; ordinary and higher, distinction, 153–4; 'second birth', 154
Mereshkovsky, Dmitri S., 5
Migraine, 100
Milk, 127 and *n.*
Mind: breath retention in stilling of, 77–8, 149, 152, 156, 160; incantation, 156–9; purification of, 41, 154; Raja Yoga, a study of, 15, 62; tension, breaking of, 148–52; trinity with body and spirit, 89*n.*
Monastic life, devotional practices of, 66–7
Moods, and breathing, 49
Moral qualities: abdominal functioning and, 8, 48–9, 64, 88, 98, 106; cultivation of, 40–1, 53–4
Motion (*sattva*), 89*n.*, 127*n.*
Muladhara chakra, 34, 37
Muscular strength, healthy body not dependent on, 51*n.*, 83

Nature, qualities (*gunas*) of, 127*n.*
Nehru, Pandit, 11, 58, 60
Nervous system, spinal cord and, 87
Newton, Sir Isaac, 23
Nirvana, 27, 43, 68
Nose, hygiene of, 146–7
'Now, non-existent', 16

Obedience, 53
OM, the, 156–9
Omar Khayyám, 17, 19
Ouspensky, P. D., 5
Overhead stretch, 79–80

Padmasana (lotus posture), 56, 59, 88*n.*, 89, 109
Pain, an illusion, 21
Pascal, Blaise, 23
Paschimottanasana (forward bend), 108
Patanjali, 15, 38, 41, 55, 151, 154
Paul, St., 7, 26, 27, 67–8, 129, 130
Peacock posture (*mayurasana*), 115–16
Pedalling movement, 94, 99
Personality, 15, 17–21, 124
Pillars posture, 114–15, 165
Pingala (positive of *prana*), 33, 49; 'the sun breath', 49, 84
Plough posture (*halasana*), 108–9
Poise (*tamas*), 89*n.*, 127*n.*
Posterior lateral stretch, 81
Postures—see *Asanas*
Powers, trinities of, 89*n.*
Prabhavananda, Swami, 15*n*
Prakriti, 31
Prana (the Life Force), 31, 32, 37, 64, 87; food and, 63, 125–6; and Holy Spirit, 65, 67, 153; positive and negative divisions of, 33, 49, 62, 73, 83–4
Pranayama—*see* Breathing
Prayer, 52; fasting and, 6–8, 41, 64

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'Present moment', no room for, 16, 18
Preservation, aspect of Reality, 31, 89*n.*
Prolapse, 92, 93, 100
Psychic powers, 38–42
Puja (ceremony), 24, 25
Pundit (teacher), 24
Purification: abdominal, 60; breathing exercises in, 9; fasting a means of, 9, 143–5; elimination in, 137–47; intestinal, 138–46; keynote of Hatha Yoga, 50, 51, 53, 161; of mind, 41, 154

Quietism, 154

Raja (or Royal) Yoga: allied with Jnana, 14; and psychic powers, 38, 39, 41, 42; and study of mind, 15, 27, 62, 154
Rajas (inertia), 89*n.*, 127*n.*
Reality, 16–17; aspects of, 31, 89*n.*; Ultimate one-ness, 30–1
Recti muscles, control of, 135–6
Repetition (*japa*), 7*n.*
Respiration—*see* Breathing
Rotational stretching, 82
Roy, Dilip Kumar, 60*n.*
Russell, Bertrand, 22–3, 60

Sadhu (teacher), 24, 25
Sahasrara (master centre), 32, 37
Sahasrara chakra, 34
Saints and mystics, devotional practices of, 66–7
Sakasana (cross-legged posture), 89, 155
Salabhasana (locust posture), 115
Samadhi (contemplation), 41
Samskaras (innate endowments), 36
Sarvangasana (shoulderstand), 92–4
Sat-asat (existence-non-existence), 28
Sattva (motion), 89*n.*, 127*n*,
Schools (*ashrams*), 3, 10, 54–5; commercialized aspect of, 59–60
'Scissors' exercise, 134
'Scissors' movement, 94, 99, 163
Scriabin, Alexander, 5–6
Seated postures, 88–90, 163
'Second birth', 154
Secret Agent 'ST 25' (Dukes), 6*n.*
Self-abnegation, 23–4, 36
Self-realization, 36
Self-torture, 56
Sense impressions, 20
Serpent, symbolism of, 32
Serpent Power, The (Woodroffe), 34–5, 41
Service, spirit of, 53
Shirsasana (headstand), 52, 66, 88*n.*, 94–100
Shiva, 31, 89*n.*
Shoulder balance, 94
Shoulderstand (*sarvangasana*), 92–4, 110–11
Siddhasana (half-lotus posture), 89
Siddhi (psychic powers), 38–42
Sideslip movement, 102–4, 162, 163
Sinus trouble, 100
'Skill in action', aim of Karma, 25, 26
Skin: activation in abdominal squeeze, 133; eliminative organ, 144; and *prana*, 64; preserving of, 146
Slow-motion stretching breaths, 72–3, 79–83, 151, 152, 155, 162
Solar plexus, 8, 48, 50
Solar system, symbolism, of, 47–50
Song Celestial, The (Arnold), 25*n.*
Sound: in Mantra Yoga, 27, 41, 67, 158; OM, 156–8
Speech, breath control in, 69
Spinal cord, 49, 51, 62; control and training of, 88–116 (*see also Asanas*); nervous system and, 87
Spinal twist (*ardha-matsyendrasana*), 105–6
Sri Auribindo *ashram*, 55, 157
Stomach: abuse of, 120; balance, 113; capacity of, 119–20; control of, 63–4; during fasting, 143–4; intelligence of, 123–4

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Stretching breaths, slow-motion, 72–3, 79–83, 151, 152, 155, 162
Sukasana (cross-legged posture), 89, 155
'Sun and moon' breathing, 62, 73, 83–6
Sushumna (central canal of spinal column), 37
Suspended animation, 71*n.*
Sutras of Patanjali, 15*n.*, 38, 151, 154
Svadhisthana chakra, 34
Swami (teacher), 24
Symbolism, 32–3; of solar system, 47–50
Sympathy, 53

Tamas (poise), 89*n.*, 127*n.*
Tantras, 35*n.*
Taste, 123
Telepathy, 43
Tennyson, Lord, 4
Tension, breaking up of, 148–52
'Third eye', 8, 77, 156
Thought: abdominal organs and quality of, 48–9; transference, 43
Thunderbolt posture (*vajrasana*), 88*n.*, 89, 95
Time, nature of, 16–17
Tortoise posture (*garbhasana*), 109
Trances, 41
Transformation (or Destruction), aspect of Reality, 31, 89*n.*
Trinities of powers, 89*n.*
Truth, 'an illusion', 20

Uddiyana (abdominal squeeze), 88*n.*, 94, 99, 132–3, 156, 162, 163, 165
Unending Quest, The (Dukes), 5, 152
Unity, of Reality, 30–1, 43
Unselfishness, 53
Upanishads, 30, 43, 156–7

Vajrasana (thunderbolt posture), 88*n.*, 89, 95, 163
Varicose veins, 92, 93
Vedas, the, 3, 5*n.*, 28, 30*n.*, 68
Vegetarian diet, 126–30
Vertical stretch, 80, 164
Vertical twist, 80
Vibration, 51; in Mantra Yoga, 27, 41, 67, 158; existence in terms of, 42–3; principle of incantation, 158–9
Vishuddha chakra, 34
Vishnu, 31, 89*n.*
Vision, inner, 77*n.*
Visions, 41

Walking, as exercise, 79
Washing, internal, 138–43, 144
Water, as enema, 141–3, 144
Wheel posture (*chakrasana*), 115
Whitman, Walt, 23
Woodroffe, Sir John, 34–5, 40, 156, 159*n.*
Word (*logos*), doctrine of, 157–8
Words, repetition of, 7*n.*, 52
Work or Action (*Karma*), Yoga of, 13–14, 25–6, 27

Yawning, 72–3, 150–1
Yesudian, Selerajan, 57*n.*
Yoga and Health (Yesudian and Haitch), 57*n.*
Yogamudra posture, 109

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SIR PAUL DUKES, K.B.E.

Sir Paul Dukes is widely known as an author and lecturer on international and philosophic subjects. Born in England in 1889, he went to Russia to study music, and after graduating from the Conservatorium of St. Petersburg, became assistant to Albert Coates, principal conductor of the Imperial Russian Opera. The war of 1914-18 interrupted this career. He was taken into the British Embassy and sent to the Foreign Office, and when the revolution of 1917 resulted in the severance of diplomatic relations he was sent back to Russia to conduct the British Secret Intelligence Service. This work, for which he was knighted, and which necessitated his living in Russia in disguise, he has described in his book "Secret Agent 'ST25'." The story of his interest in Yoga and his studies under various Masters is told in his book "The Unending Quest". When he retired from his activities relating to international affairs he was invited by the B.B.C. to give a series of television demonstrations which were highly successful and did much to popularize Yoga in Great Britain. Under the title "Students of Western Yoga" he opened studios in London, Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. During his recent two-year sojourn in India he was consulted by the Indian Government regarding the introduction of physical and mental Yoga for army and civil service recruits, and under official auspices gave a series of lecture-demonstrations which were attended by Chiefs of Staff, medical officers, and other high officials. The Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, expressed his gratification personally, and the Director of Medical Services in the Armed Forces wrote thanking Sir Paul for his efforts "in spreading knowledge of Yoga in India".

The special feature of Sir Paul's system is its adaptation to the material and psychological conditions of the West. Yoga training differs from ordinary physical culture in that it not only improves the general health and physical appearance, but aims particularly at toning and tuning the nervous system, increasing powers of concentration and emotional control, prolonging youth and imparting an abounding sense of joy in life and service. The teaching is accompanied by a philosophy urging the highest ideals, but it in no way intrudes in the private life of any individual as regards religion, politics, or personal beliefs of any kind. Its watchwords are Health, Happiness and Efficiency, in whatever occupation, profession, or avocation any man or woman has chosen or is called upon to perform.

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